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ABSTRACT

This document describes the history of the New American Schools (NAS) organization from establishment in 1991 as the New American Schools Development Corporation (NASDC) to its present form. The organization requested proposals, received hundreds of applications, and ultimately selected 11. The successful proposals shared many ideas and assumptions rooted in the progressive education movement of the early 20th century, including whole-school reform. Unfortunately, design teams varied in the progress they made in participating schools because of the variety of programs, divisions in school communities, and resistance to change. Scale-up did occur along with a change in scope of operation. NAS ceased to operate as an agency committed to operating outside the constraints of Washington and became an institution with deep roots inside the Beltway. Evaluations of reform designs found mixed results with no dramatic achievement gains. In June 2001, the Memphis superintendent abandoned the district's involvement with whole-school reform after a survey showed no gains in student achievement and, in some cases, declines. It is presently difficult to assess the impact of the NAS initiative considering the variety of programs, a pervasive push to maintain the status quo of education, and cases of poor implementation and problematic evaluation. (RT)

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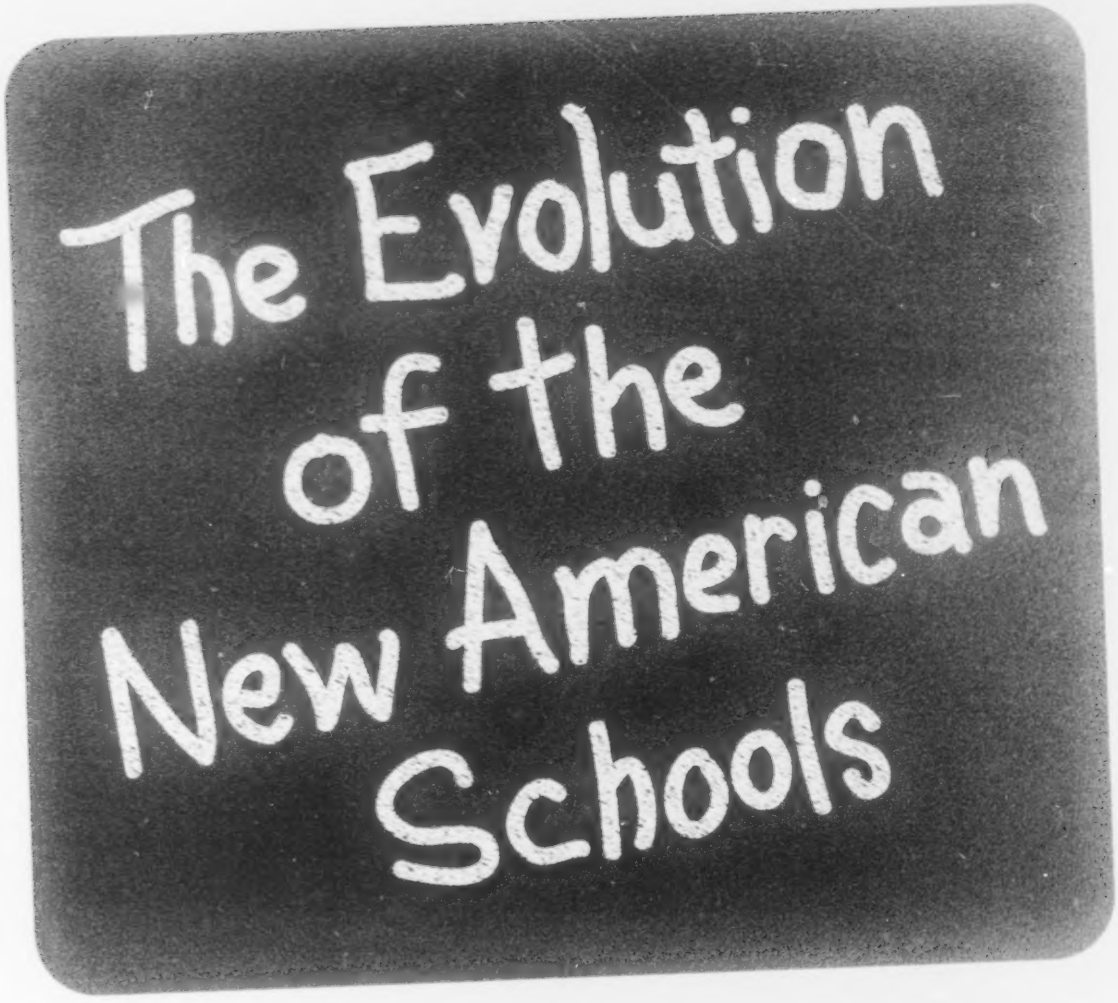

From Revolution to Mainstream

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by Jeffrey Mirel

OCTOBER 2001

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The Evolution of the New American Schools:

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Foreword

In the summer of 1991, at the urging of President George Bush, Education Secretary Lamar Alexander, and Deputy Secretary David Kearns, CEOs from major U.S. corporations launched the New American Schools Development Corporation (NASDC). In so doing, they pledged to spark a revolution in American education. NASDC would cast aside traditional ideas about schools and apply a no-nonsense, business-savvy approach to support the design and deployment of "break-the-mold" schools. All this would mark a sharp break from failed education experiments of the past and from the constrained yet faddish nostrums that emerge from conventional sources of education "reform."

Ten years later, it is time to assess whether the organization those corporate leaders created — and for which they had such high hopes — has fulfilled its mandate and lived up to its lofty promise.

We asked Jeffrey Mirel, a distinguished education historian at the University of Michigan, to examine where New American Schools (NAS, as the organization is now named) came from, where it is going, whether it has carried out its mission, and how successful it has been in improving educational outcomes. The careful history of NAS that he has written is a fascinating, if rather depressing, study of a new organization's metamorphosis from revolutionary outsider to Beltway insider, from bumptious upstart to establishment bulwark.

In this report, Professor Mirel traces the development of NAS from its origins as part of the Bush-Alexander-Kearns "America 2000" education-reform initiative, through the initial competition among design proposals seeking funding, the selection and winnowing of designs, implementation, evaluation, and scale-up.

He finds that NAS showed signs from the outset that it was headed for the education mainstream. Observers noted that the initial request for proposals (RFP) process itself attracted and rewarded established educators and familiar ideas, indeed, that nearly all the winning proposals shared similar ideas and practices rooted in the progressive education movement that has long been the dominant paradigm of American primary/secondary education. "Can you have a revolution via an RFP process?" critics wondered.

By 2001, NAS designs were in place in more than thirty-five hundred schools. But Mirel explains that a series of studies published by RAND has found many of these schools still struggling to put the core elements of the designs into place. "Don't think that you can just buy this off-the-shelf technology, plug it into a school, and then things will improve," said one evaluator. Transforming a school turns out to be hard work. And the jury is still out on whether most of the NAS designs yield stronger achievement even when successfully implemented.

Today, however, with billions of federal dollars subsidizing its advance, the strategy known as whole-school reform is a fixture of the U.S. education landscape. NAS did a great deal to bring that situation about. This report explores how that happened and raises questions about just how desirable it is.

Jeffrey Mirel is the author of *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System: Detroit, 1907-81* and coauthor, with David Angus, of *The Failed Promise of the American High School, 1890-1995*. In January 2001, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation published *Professionalism and the Public Good: A Brief History of Teacher Certification*, a report which was begun by the late Dr. Angus and completed and edited by Professor Mirel. Readers interested in contacting Professor Mirel may write to him at 4114 School of Education Building, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259, call him at 734-615-8983, or e-mail him at jmirel@umich.edu.

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Chester E. Finn, Jr., President
Thomas B. Fordham Foundation
Washington, D.C.
October 2001

Executive Summary

The New American Schools Development Corporation (NASDC) was established in 1991. A privately funded nonprofit organization, it was launched by CEOs from a number of major U.S. corporations who were inspired — in large part by Lamar Alexander and David Kearns — to apply their acumen and experience to the challenge of reforming American elementary/secondary education. As part of President Bush's America 2000 education strategy, the New American Schools initiative was intended to create and deploy a series of break-the-mold schools that would stimulate a wholesale redesign of U.S. education, replacing a failing old model with sparkling new ones. Or so the founders hoped.

NASDC began by seeking innovative ideas for creating schools in which all students would meet world-class standards; its request for proposals asked applicants to "assume that the schools we have inherited did not exist." Hundreds applied, and eleven design proposals were ultimately selected for funding in 1992. While the initial popular response to the NASDC initiative was positive, there was a small but vocal group of critics. On the left, some contended that this business-oriented approach ignored more pressing education concerns like funding and the needs of minorities. On the right, some argued that the RFP process was itself skewed to favor safe rather than break-the-mold designs. In any event, most of the winning proposals came from well-known educators with a record of past funding from government and foundation sources. The successful proposals also shared many ideas and assumptions, rooted in the questionable philosophies and practices of the progressive education movement of the early twentieth century. Critics noted that, outside of a few schools serving elite students, progressive education has rarely fulfilled its pedagogical promise and has been especially unsuccessful with children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Yet most of the designs that NASDC chose to support were cut from this education cloth.

In its first two years, NASDC struggled to raise funds, but a large grant from philanthropist Walter Annenberg helped it stay afloat. As NASDC began to scale up its operations to reach more schools, it hoped to move beyond the creation of model schools to the transformation of whole systems, a strategy that dovetailed nicely with the Clinton administration's efforts to promote "systemic" reform. Between 1992 and 1995, nine NASDC-supported design teams installed their plans in about 150 schools in nineteen states. In 1995, the organization reached agreements with two states and eight large urban districts to implement larger-scale programs developed by the teams.

Implementation was anything but smooth, however. Design teams varied in the progress they made in participating schools, in part because some designs focused on narrow changes in instruction and curriculum while others sought to introduce broader reforms in school governance, reforms that typically proved very difficult to implement. People in communities targeted by NASDC were often deeply divided. Principals worried that there was a mismatch between the design teams' student-centered approaches and the more traditional standards and tests being used by states and districts. NASDC reformers gradually discovered how arduous it is to change existing schools.

Scale-up nevertheless continued and, by mid-1997, 553 schools were implementing NASDC designs. (By then the organization had shortened its name to New American Schools, or NAS.) Memphis was NAS's marquee district, with nearly 30 percent of its schools adopting some form of whole-school design by 1997. (Ultimately all schools in the district would be required to adopt a design.) A study conducted by researchers at three universities found significantly greater

achievement gains in the redesigned Memphis schools than in the others.

By late 1997, NAS was evolving into a clearinghouse of reform; instead of funding design teams itself, it would help them become self-sufficient organizations capable of marketing and supporting their own products. According to this plan, each team would not only have to sell itself; it would also have to help find the funds for districts to use in paying for its services. The solution was found in Washington, where an amendment to the 1998 Education Department appropriation provided $150 million in grants to aid schools in adopting whole-school models of change that had been proven effective. Known as "Obey-Porter money" after the two Congressmen who brought it into existence (but formally called the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program), this meshed nicely with NAS, and all seven of the surviving NAS designs appeared on a list of seventeen programs cited by the amendment as models that districts could adopt. NAS was changing from an agency committed to operating outside the constraints of Washington into one that depended on Washington for the success of its venture.

Critics noted at the time Obey-Porter was enacted that none of the NAS designs could provide substantial evidence of effectiveness in improving achievement, and schools continued to have difficulty implementing the designs. Nonetheless, by 2001 over thirty-five hundred schools nationwide were using NAS designs. A RAND study recalled that the original NASDC request for proposals declared that the organization was "not interested in incremental changes that promise, at best, modest improvements in student achievement compared to conventional classrooms or schools." Something far more momentous was expected. Yet evaluations of the designs (including several by RAND) continued to find mixed results, with no dramatic achievement gains. In June 2001, based on his own study of the schools' effectiveness, the Memphis superintendent announced that he was abandoning the district's six-year involvement with whole-school reform.

Yet NAS will probably weather this storm. Despite setbacks, whole-school reform has become increasingly popular, and NAS has sought for itself an even greater role as the national leader of this initiative. It created a "blue-ribbon panel" to set standards for communities adopting whole-school designs and has helped launch an independent organization that is supposed to rate the quality of school designs and other education interventions. NAS leaders play an active role in debates about federal education policy — and are prominent lobbyists on Capitol Hill on behalf of Obey-Porter and Title I dollars for whole-school programs. These developments provide evidence that NAS is becoming an institution with deep roots inside the Beltway.

The heady predictions that surrounded the launch of NASDC — that it would bring about an education revolution — have proved to be so much hype. Early on, this initiative foreswore revolutionary ways and headed toward the education mainstream. NAS has played a key role in making whole-school reform one of the most visible and popular education reform strategies in the land. Given the dearth of evidence on the effectiveness of most of the designs, however, and the arduous nature of introducing whole-school reform in urban districts, it would be unfortunate if this approach to education improvement pushed aside less dramatic but possibly more effective strategies for reforming K-12 education in the United States.

Introduction

In the summer of 1991, in response to President George Bush's America 2000 education initiative, chief executive officers from a number of major corporations established the New American Schools Development Corporation (NASDC), a privately funded, nonprofit organization to support education reform. Determined to apply their expertise in corporate restructuring and their knowledge of the skills necessary to compete in the global economy, the CEOs declared that the projects funded by NASDC would spark a revolution in American education.[1]

Founders envisioned a wholesale redesign of American education stimulated by break-the-mold schools.

These early leaders of what later became known simply as New American Schools (NAS) believed that their efforts would mark a sharp break with the "failed experiments of the past." They sought to address the problem of educational change in three new ways. First, they were determined to apply a no-nonsense business approach to their efforts. NASDC would be less bureaucratic, more attuned to new ideas, and more aggressive in responding to these ideas than any existing government agency or major foundation. In short, it would be as lean and agile as the corporations they led.[2] Second, the NASDC founders envisioned a wholesale redesign of American education stimulated by a series of break-the-mold schools that they would support. As one put it, people hoping to receive NASDC funds had to "cast aside their old notions about schooling — to start with a clean sheet of paper, and be bold and creative in their thinking, and to give us ideas that address comprehensive, systemic change for *all* students for *whole* schools" (emphasis in the original). Former New Jersey governor Thomas Kean, the first chair of the NASDC board, was even more expansive, stating that the new organization was looking for reform proposals that would lead to "massive changes in American schools. We are aiming for nothing less than a fundamental and dramatic change in education."[3] Third, NASDC leaders "pledged to use a venture capital model of investment: At each stage of development they would critically examine the success of the designs and continue to fund only those that demonstrated real potential for transforming large numbers of schools."[4] Susan Bodilly, a RAND analyst who has extensively studied the NASDC/NAS initiative, described why this approach to educational reform was so new:

> The notion of NASDC is somewhat unique — to deliberately develop expert organizations that can help schools transform themselves. NASDC's focus has always been on whole-school design, not design of specific subcomponents of schooling; all the designs require full transformation of the school. If its potential is met, the idea of an expert organization providing both a whole-school design and the implementation assistance offers some hope of altering the pattern of failed reform common in schools today.[5]

In some ways, NAS fits neatly into the broad history of American education reform. Since at least the Progressive Era (roughly 1895-1920), business leaders have played important, sometimes decisive, roles in school reform, and pedagogical leaders have designed break-the-mold schools that they hoped would be models for transforming all of American education.[6] This report assesses the degree to which NAS continues or challenges these earlier traditions. It analyzes

whether NAS-supported projects break the mold in terms of philosophy and practice and how successful they have been in improving educational outcomes to date. In broader terms, this study tries to determine the degree to which NAS has fulfilled its original, revolutionary mandate; to assess where it has succeeded and where it has failed; and to speculate on whether it will leave a lasting and positive imprint on American education.[7]

The report is divided into four main sections. The first traces the origins of the New American Schools initiative as part of President George Bush's America 2000 education policy. The second section describes the initial competition for NASDC funding and summarizes the eleven school-reform designs that NASDC chose to support, as well as the controversies that arose about them and the selection process. Section three examines the challenges NAS faced and the changes it made following the election of Bill Clinton in 1992, the progress NAS made in implementing the designs in an increasing number of schools, and the first set of research reports assessing the implementation phase of the NAS initiative. The final section describes the scaling-up phase of NAS during which the organization introduced its designs into thousands of schools across the country. The section also explores the changing relationship between NAS and the federal government following the passage of the Obey-Porter amendment in 1997, the research evaluating the NAS initiative to date, and the recent dramatic setback for NAS following rejection of this entire reform effort by one of its major jurisdictions.

Origins of New American Schools

No privately supported education reform effort has had so auspicious a beginning as the New American Schools. On July 8, 1991, when President George Bush, Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander, and the board of directors of the New American Schools Development Corporation stood in the Rose Garden and introduced NASDC to the nation, their excitement and hope about the project seemed boundless. Describing this initiative as a major step towards an "educational revolution," President Bush declared that NASDC would "set aside stale preconceptions" about school reform and "seek nothing less than a new generation of schools."[8]

> The New American Schools initiatives were the most fully conceived element of President Bush's America 2000 education strategy.

The New American Schools initiative was an important part, perhaps *the* most important part, of President Bush's multifaceted America 2000 education strategy. That strategy sought to build on the success of the 1989 meeting between Bush and the nation's governors, where the assembled dignitaries committed themselves to realizing six national education goals. First announced in April 1991, America 2000 was an ambitious reform package that introduced four different but related approaches to improving U.S. schools. They were (1) improving existing schools through high standards, testing, merit pay for teachers, and greater school choice; (2) creating a "nation of students" through programs promoting adult learning, such as local clinics where people could upgrade their skills in numerous areas; (3) establishing America 2000 communities committed to

implementing the national education goals, developing local report cards for measuring their progress towards those goals, and "demonstrating readiness to create and support a New American School"; and (4) inventing a "new generation of American schools" as models of excellence and innovation for the nation. The New American Schools Development Corporation was to be the R&D arm of this fourth effort.[9]

The New American Schools initiatives were the most fully conceived element of America 2000. According to President Bush, NASDC was based on a "simple but powerful" idea: "Put America's special genius for invention to work for America's schools." The plan called for the creation of 535 break-the-mold schools by 1996. Each of the 435 congressional districts in the country would be home to one of these schools; two more schools per state would be funded as well. All of these schools would receive a one-time federal grant of $1 million in start-up funds. As these schools came on-line, the privately funded New American Schools Development Corporation would support R&D teams that would be responsible for creating innovative educational designs to be implemented in these schools. NASDC would raise between $150 and $200 million for this R&D effort.[10]

> As federal policy shifted, NASDC had to restructure itself to be more than just an R&D center.

Critics take aim

Initially, America 2000 received high marks from educators and analysts throughout the country. Some commentators declared that these proposals marked the most ambitious federal education initiative since the Johnson administration. Yet within a month of America 2000's introduction, critics began taking aim at key provisions of the package. These critiques went beyond the likely targets of greater school choice and merit pay for teachers. NASDC in particular drew heavy fire. For example, Rep. Major Owens, a Democratic leader in the House, questioned whether ideology or effectiveness would determine the designs that NASDC funded: "Will they be able to offer rewards or deny benefits to certain groups that don't agree with them, that don't toe the line? Will they be able to use their research to discredit certain government-funded research?" Other commentators wondered whether the business community, which already contributed $200-225 million annually to education projects, could come up with even more money for NASDC, or whether such giving would have to be scaled back to pay for this new initiative.[11] Beyond these broad questions, a number of critics asked whether the 535 innovative schools would really help existing schools or whether they would solely benefit the small number of children who would attend them. As this criticism mounted, the Democrats in control of Congress shelved many of the America 2000 initiatives, including the proposal for 535 break-the-mold schools.[12]

The future of the 535 schools became even bleaker the following year, as Bush's America 2000 package became an issue in the 1992 presidential campaign. By April, *Education Week* reported that Democratic lawmakers had "so watered down Mr. Bush's plan for federal funding of 535 innovative 'New American Schools' as to have effectively killed it." In May, Bill Clinton, at the time still running for the Democratic nomination, attacked America 2000, saying it would merely "tinker around the edges" of school reform. He specifically took aim at the 535 model schools initiative, calling it a proposal that would "leave the rest behind."[13]

Amid this highly charged political atmosphere, NASDC leaders set out to raise $200

million to support the venture, prepare a set of guidelines for the R&D teams that would compete for funds, and announce the Request for Proposals (RFP) for that competition. In addition, as it became increasingly clear that 535 federally funded schools would not be part of the larger New American Schools enterprise, NASDC had to restructure itself to be more than just an R&D center. Although NASDC had never been directly linked to these model schools, as one education reporter noted, "it had been assumed the two initiatives would complement each other." Given the emerging political reality, NASDC sought instead to become a source for supporting not only the teams' research and development but also the implementation and dissemination of the teams' ideas. Contained within that change in focus was the idea that at some point the design teams would strike out on their own, becoming fee-taking enterprises offering their programs to schools and districts across the nation. In some ways, these changes strengthened NASDC's claim of being a bold new venture in education reform since few privately funded initiatives had ever committed to so ambitious a program.[14]

Designs and Controversies

NASDC set a deadline of February 14, 1992, for responses to its Request for Proposals. The basic guidelines for the competition were straightforward and simple. NASDC sought innovative ideas for creating schools in which all students would meet "world-class standards." Beyond that, the RFP challenged proposal writers as follows:

> Assume that the schools we have inherited did not exist, and design an educational environment to bring every child in this community up to world class standards in English, mathematics, science, history, and geography, prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment. No question about schooling should be off-limits; no answer assumed.[15]

The RFP also required that the designs be replicable in other communities:

> *This is not a request to establish "model" schools.* NASDC does not seek to develop "cookie cutter" designs. The designs must be adaptable so that they can be used by many communities to create their own schools . . . The important thing is that long after NASDC has disappeared from the scene, its legacy for new designs will remain [emphasis in the original].[16]

While NASDC assumed that it would support the initial start-up costs for these break-the-mold schools, it also insisted that once they were running they would operate within the same budget constraints as conventional schools.

In all, the organization received 686 proposals from almost every state in the union, as well as one from American Samoa and two from Canada. In a press conference, NASDC chairman Thomas Kean declared, "We've had a response that frankly I did not dream of or envision . . . We have sparked an unprecedented collaborative process, all across the nation, on the part of American education's brightest people." NASDC hoped to fund about thirty proposals.[17]

After an extensive six-month review process, however, NASDC leaders selected only eleven design proposals for funding due in part to their having raised only about a quarter of the original $200 million goal. Despite its fund-raising problems, NASDC proudly presented the winning designs as evidence that its approach to education

reform was on track. At the ceremony introducing the winning designs, Kean envisioned a glorious future. "You are going to see massive changes in American schools," he declared. "We are aiming at nothing less than a fundamental and dramatic change in education."[18]

The eleven winning proposals were

• **Audrey Cohen College System of Education (Audrey Cohen).** This design was organized as a series of "complex and meaningful . . . purposes" (e.g., "We Make Our Neighborhood a Better Place to Live") in which students applied content knowledge to solving "real world" problems. The curriculum was interdisciplinary and project driven with the goal of having schoolwork contribute to "improving the world outside of school."[19]

• **Authentic Teaching, Learning, and Assessment for All Students (ATLAS).** Drawing on the work of a number of nationally prominent educators, this design engaged students in "active inquiry" as part of an integrated curriculum built around "essential questions" (e.g., "Where Do I Come From?"). Teams of teachers worked with students over several years in K-12 "pathways." They collaborated with one another and with parents and administrators in developing "locally-defined standards," curriculum design, and assessment. The goal was to create "communities of learners."[20]

• **Bensenville New American School.** This program centered on using "the entire community as a school campus" with pupils actively involved in real problems in diverse settings (e.g., students could be assigned to a local business to see how "learning has a tangible and immediate purpose"). Students were grouped according to their progress in moving through an interdisciplinary curriculum rather than by age or traditional grades. The design heavily depended on technology to keep teachers and students connected in various learning settings.[21]

• **Community Learning Centers of Minnesota.** Using Minnesota's new charter-school law, this design sought to empower teachers, parents, and community members to create schools that are "learner centered" and "meaningful." The key to finding meaning was involving students in "real life tasks" such as "using statistics to conduct and analyze a community survey of attitudes about taxes." Students were expected to use "experiential and active learning approaches" to master an interdisciplinary curriculum. Computer-supported work would also be used to enhance learning.[22]

• **Co-NECT Design for School Change (Co-NECT).** This design was constructed around an interdisciplinary curriculum that combined "ongoing" student-initiated projects with teacher-initiated seminars. In their project-based inquiries, students were expected to explore a "single topic in depth (such as the causes and effects of seasonal change)." Clusters of teachers and students remained together for several years. Supported by a number of prominent high-tech companies (e.g., Apple, Lotus, NYNEX), this design had a strong emphasis on students' using computer technologies and networks for projects and for online interchanges among members of the school community.[23]

• **Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (Expeditionary Learning).** Based on the principles of the Outward Bound program, this design blended intellectual, emotional, and character education into a single curriculum. The course

of study was based on the International Baccalaureate, but its strong emphasis on content was "intertwined" with engaging learning expeditions. Teachers initiated these interdisciplinary expeditions and guided students to actively investigate such topics as "Understanding the Bubonic Plague." Students and teachers stayed together for several years.[24]

• **Los Angeles Learning Centers.** This design was structured as a "moving diamond" that ensured "long-term continuous, multiple advocates for each child." The "moving diamond" linked each child in the program with three different mentors — an older student, a parent or community member, and a teacher. This foursome stayed together for several years to provide academic and emotional support for the child. Teachers worked in interdisciplinary teams developing curricula and "real-world, complex problems" that would enlist and maintain student interest.[25]

• **Modern Red Schoolhouse**. This design sought to fuse the best of old-fashioned one-room schools (e.g., multi-age homerooms that keep students and their teacher together for several years) with the most modern aspects of information technology (e.g., internet communication between parents and teachers). It focused on student mastery of a strong, academic curriculum (influenced by the ideas of such educators as E.D. Hirsch, Jr., and William J. Bennett). Students signed "education contracts" that designated material to be learned and then, with support from teachers and technology, worked at their own pace to complete it.[26]

• **National Alliance for Restructuring Education.** Different from the other designs, this initiative concentrated on both systemic and school-level reforms. The design coordinated districtwide education, health, and human services in ways that aimed to improve student learning, to develop performance standards for students, and to align curriculum and teaching to these standards. Teachers worked with students as "collaborators" in learning. Schools were run according to the principles of Total Quality Management.[27]

• **The Odyssey Project.** This community-based design developed in Gaston County, North Carolina, dispensed with traditional grades and replaced them with broad groupings (e.g., "Alpha" for ages zero to three, "Beta" for ages three to six, etc.). Students progressed at their own pace through the interdisciplinary curriculum by meeting specific "performance outcomes." Teachers acted as "learning facilitators." Students and parents had a community-service component in the program. Older students participated in weekly seminars that focused "on national and world citizenship" and multicultural issues.[28]

• **Roots and Wings: Universal Excellence in Elementary Education (Roots and Wings).** Building upon the Success for All program, this design focused on having students develop strong basic skills such as reading and writing (the roots) as well as content knowledge and higher order thinking skills (the wings). A central feature was the WorldLab that involved students in real-world activities, projects, and simulations (e.g., representing the thirteen colonies in debating and drafting the U.S. Constitution). The goal of WorldLab was for students "to see the interconnectedness and usefulness of knowledge." This program made extensive use of one-on-one tutoring.[29]

Ambitious intentions

NASDC leaders believed in these projects.

They expected that, with a bit more polishing and with the insights gained from implementing the designs in a small number of settings, these programs would lead an education revolution. As Kean put it, these designs would produce "massive changes in American schools." To bring this revolution about, NASDC established a three-phase process for refining, implementing, and marketing the designs. Phase one, which began in 1992 with the announcement of the winning design teams, provided one year of funding in which the teams refined the ideas of their original proposals "into workable designs for school transformation." At the end of phase one, NASDC dropped two of the designs, the Bensenville New American Schools and the Odyssey Project. Phase two provided an additional two years of NASDC funding for the remaining design teams to implement (and further refine) their ideas and approaches in more schools. This phase ran from 1993 to 1995. At the end of phase two, NASDC determined that two more designs, Community Learning Centers and Los Angeles Learning Centers, would not receive support for the next phase (although the Los Angles group eventually rejoined NAS with a new name, Urban Learning Centers, and a more narrowly focused mission). Finally, phase three involved a two-year scaling-up process in which the remaining designs were to be put into practice in a "large number of schools across the country." NASDC stuck to this timetable for phases one and two, the first taking place in 1991-1992 and the second in 1993-1995. However, the scale-up phase, which began in mid-1995, has taken longer and, in essence, continues today.[30]

The press conference announcing the winning proposals was enthusiastic, and observers found the phased reform process promising. Over the next two years, through phase one and the beginning of phase two, the popular and media response to the NAS initiative was generally upbeat and positive. Yet that response was not universal. A small but vocal group of critics repeatedly questioned NASDC and the designs. The critics fell into two categories — liberal commentators who saw NASDC as at best another misguided Republican education scheme, and moderates and conservatives who argued that NASDC was squandering its revolutionary potential.

Attacks from the left

Initially the negative assessments came primarily from liberal critics of the Bush administration. Typical was a 1992 article in the *Nation*. The authors assessed the winning NASDC proposals and flatly declared that "most of the educational R&D teams endorsed by the corporation comprise an incestuous circle of right-wing ideologues and privatization advocates, teacher-hating technocrats and recession-rocked military contractors, their funding made palatable to the press by token support for established and respected liberal school-reform advocates." This type of criticism castigated virtually every Bush initiative as an attack on public education.[31]

Other, more temperate, liberal critics argued that NASDC and the rest of America 2000 had misplaced priorities and ignored such pressing educational issues as equalizing funding for poor districts and addressing the education needs of minorities. Former U.S. commissioner of education Harold Howe II, for example, derided the business-oriented approach taken by NASDC, declaring "You can bet that, when these parties get together, they will spend little time in making a diverse society work." (Apparently shelving this criticism, one year later Howe strongly endorsed one of the NASDC design teams, even agreeing to be a member of its council of senior advisors).[32]

Writing from an historical perspective, David Tyack and Larry Cuban wondered whether the NAS initiative was just another example of a century-old tradition in which "ambitious reformers have promised to create sleek, efficient school machines 'light years' ahead of the fusty schools of their times."

They speculated that NASDC would probably travel down the same path to obscurity that so many earlier attempts to reinvent schools had followed. They argued that such efforts to reinvent schools have in practice "often resembled shooting stars that spurted across the pedagogical heavens, leaving a meteoric trail in the media but burning up and disappearing in the everyday atmosphere of the schools." [33]

These liberal commentators raised provocative questions such as whether the NAS program would be driven more by politics than pedagogy, but generally they proved to be better critics than prophets. For example, as this report will show, contrary to Howe's prediction, the NAS designs have overwhelmingly focused on improving education for urban and minority students. While Tyack and Cuban's speculation was closer to the mark, NAS and its design teams, as we shall see, rather than "disappearing in the everyday atmosphere of the schools" have survived for a decade, due in large part to their ability to adapt to the changing political and pedagogical environment.

Conservatives argued that NASDC had squandered its revolutionary potential.

Attacks from the right

Intriguing as were some of the liberal critiques, those from moderates and conservatives were, for the most part, more incisive. These criticisms rested on a series of interrelated propositions, all of which argued that NASDC had squandered much of its revolutionary potential and was devolving into a fairly conventional educational reform organization. The first of these criticisms maintained that the RFP process was skewed to insure the choice of "safe" rather than "break-the-mold" designs. Rather than resembling a lean and agile start-up venture, these critics maintained, the NASDC RFP process was in some ways more like that of the government or a major foundation. This meant that experienced grant writers with well-established track records in program development and implementation would have an enormous advantage in the competition.

In fact, that is exactly what occurred. By setting up the process in a conventional way, NASDC almost guaranteed that most of the winning proposals would come from established education reformers and their groups. Mark Sherry, a proposal reviewer who was generally quite positive about NASDC, observed that many of the winning proposals were notable for the quality of their prose and the documentation, all hallmarks of products produced by individuals and groups skilled in proposal writing. Not surprisingly, he noted, "it seems that many of the winning proposals came from well-known educators with a track record of past funding from the government and foundation sources." James Mecklenburger, editor and publisher of *Inventing Tomorrow's Schools*, made a similar point, noting that "in more than half of the eleven projects, already established stars walked off with big shares of the prize money."[34]

Nationally renowned individuals associated with some of the winning NASDC designs included James Comer from Yale, Howard Gardner from Harvard, Theodore Sizer from Brown (all of whom were involved with ATLAS); Robert Slavin from Johns Hopkins (Roots and Wings); Robert Glaser and Lauren Resnick from the University of Pittsburgh and Marc Tucker, formerly with the National Institute of Education (National Alliance for Restructuring Education); and former U.S. secretary of education William Bennett, former assistant secretary Chester E. Finn, Jr., and well-known education critic Denis P. Doyle (Modern Red Schoolhouse). After surveying the list of winners, John Whiting, a business leader who closely followed NASDC, stated that "rather than identify[ing]

contemporary problem-solving experts with the capacity to look at educational problems with unbiased eyes and come up with innovative solutions, NASDC chose to concede the responsibility for solving the problems of American education to educators who had been largely responsible for maintaining the existing system."[35]

The second major criticism emerged directly from the first. The traditional RFP process not only rounded up many of the usual educational suspects, but as a consequence it rounded up the usual educational ideas, too. Lynn Olson of *Education Week* pointed out that one "striking feature of the award-winning designs is how many ideas they have in common." Moreover, few of these widely shared ideas really broke the mold in educational reform. They included such things as giving administrators and teachers greater say over policy and practice in their buildings, creating multi-age groupings of students, and increasing the use of technology. Even winning proposal writer Robert Slavin noted critically, "They [NASDC] almost demanded that you put into your proposal all the things that were considered hot right now. What they've done is frozen 1992 in amber." A number of critics went further and concluded that these decisions signaled that NASDC was hedging its bets, protecting its multimillion dollar investment in education reform by selecting safe rather than risky, but possibly more revolutionary, proposals.[36] Put simply, the first two criticisms really rested on the question: Can you have a revolution via an RFP process?

> Progressive ideas have been charged with eviscerating the curriculum and encouraging anti-intellectualism.

Writing in 1992, James Mecklenburger summarized NASDC's situation: "In the summer of 1991, the New American Schools Development Corporation . . . came on like a forest fire hell-bent on identifying and putting into practice the best school restructuring ideas it could find in America . . . Today, the results of the first round of the NASDC competition are in, and NASDC seems more like a pretty good campfire than a roaring blaze — good and useful, interesting to look at, but diminished and tame when compared to its own declarations."[37]

Progressivism rides again

The third criticism provided additional evidence that the answer was "No." Beyond the fact that many of the winning proposals shared common ideas, some critics pointed out that many of those ideas were rooted in the questionable pedagogical practices of the progressive education movement of the early twentieth century.[38] Progressive education was the original break-the-mold movement in American education. It sought to transform schooling in this country through what historian Lawrence Cremin described as a Copernican revolution in education thought, shifting the center of gravity from the teacher or curriculum to the child and the child's experiences.[39]

The target of this revolution was the "traditional" school that progressives described as a grim place where teachers were distant authority figures, students marched through lock-step curricula, subjects were abstracted into unrelated disciplines, and students were forced to passively absorb mountains of meaningless facts. In short, most of what went on in these schools had little relevance to children's lives. Progressives asserted that "modern" education had to scrap virtually every aspect of the traditional school. They envisioned schools in which teachers were approachable guides or facilitators to learning, curricula began with the interests and needs of young people, and students learned what later educators

would call "higher order thinking skills" through active engagement in meaningful projects that blended many disciplines. Progressives believed that in such schools the relationship between school and life would be virtually seamless. In their widely cited 1928 book, *The Child-Centered School*, Harold Rugg and Ann Shumaker summarized the goal of progressive schools as concentrating "on understanding, on independent thinking, on critical judgment. The end sought is not the storing up of facts, but the development of the power to think."[40]

One of the most striking features of the winning NASDC proposals was how many of them appeared to have been deeply influenced by progressive thought. Indeed, most of the winning proposals read like echoes of progressive manifestos of the 1920s in their language, tone, and philosophy. Far from being new or revolutionary, many of them were, in fact, firmly grounded in very familiar progressive ideas. Seven of the eleven winning proposals, for example, expressly declared that they were child- or learner-centered. Eight sought to change the relationship between teachers and students by transforming the role of teacher into that of a "coach," "facilitator," or "guide." All promised to meet "world class" curriculum standards, but only two (Expeditionary Learning and Modern Red Schoolhouse) focused their programs around students' explicitly mastering academic disciplines. To varying degrees, nearly all the others promoted interdisciplinary curricula specifically to avoid what they saw as a key problem of traditional schools, teaching knowledge and skills in isolation.[41]

Related to this interdisciplinary focus was the widely shared commitment to use the progressive-inspired "project method" to engage the interest of students. Eight of the eleven highlighted some form of the project method as an essential feature of their break-the-mold designs. Taking its name from a widely circulated 1918 essay by William Heard Kilpatrick, a professor at Columbia's Teachers College, the project method was one of the best known progressive innovations. The eight NASDC designs proclaimed, at times in classic progressive language, that project-based education would make learning exciting, relevant, and meaningful to students in ways that traditional textbook centered education never could. In addition to projects, seven proposals envisioned using the community as a classroom to break down barriers between school and society, an idea linked to a 1900 essay by John Dewey, the great patriarch of progressive education. Like Dewey and other progressives, most of the proposal writers also averred that their approach would not lead to the "piling up of facts," but would produce students who were critical thinkers who had learned how to learn.[42]

> Parents feared that NAS design teams had rejected traditional education.

Following the announcement of the winning designs, a spokesman for the American Educational Research Association observed that many of these ideas seemed rooted in the work of John Dewey: "Mostly, it seems to me, they rediscovered [Dewey's book] *Experience and Education*."[43] The comment was insightful, but a better book to point to was *Schools of To-Morrow*, a 1915 study by Dewey and his daughter Evelyn. After denouncing traditional schools, which compelled students to pile up facts, the Deweys provided detailed descriptions of a range of schools that they believed represented some of the "best work that is being done in the country." For the Deweys, these were what might be termed break-the-mold schools of the Progressive Era, schools that they believed could lead to an education revolution. In many ways, NASDC and most of its winning design teams seemed to be drawing inspiration from this earlier progressive effort.[44]

Problems of progressivism

The problem with building educational reform on progressive ideas, as such critics as William C. Bagley, Robert Maynard Hutchins, Arthur Bestor, E.D. Hirsch, Jr., and Diane Ravitch have repeatedly shown, is that outside of a small number of schools serving highly motivated, well-to-do students, progressive education has rarely fulfilled its pedagogical promise. Indeed, these critics have argued that progressive ideas have often contributed to the evisceration of academic curricula, narrowed the scope of student learning to immediate, entertaining, but largely vapid topics, and, worst of all, encouraged anti-intellectualism.[45] Some of the most trenchant criticism of progressive ideas which appears in a recent book by the late Jeanne Chall, seems especially pertinent to the NAS designs. After surveying a host of research studies, Chall found that, on average, schools guided by progressive ideas have been less successful in raising academic achievement, especially among children from disadvantaged backgrounds, than more traditional schools.[46]

Early setbacks

While criticism from moderate or conservative individuals who otherwise would have been allies in this effort must have stung, NASDC leaders remained confident that they were supporting bold, new experiments in educational reform. Moreover, during phase one most of the design teams moved ahead smoothly, further refining their programs and successfully addressing the challenges that arose.[47]

In late 1992 and early 1993, however, the reform initiatives of two winning design teams — those in Bensenville, Illinois, and Gaston County, North Carolina — collapsed in the face of angry community challenges. Both designs were grassroots efforts developed by local communities. Neither was guided by or associated with the work of a national education leader. Many different factors contributed to their failure, including local political conflicts and union opposition in Bensenville and hostility from Christian fundamentalists in Gaston County. But among the most contentious elements of both designs was the progressive-oriented reorganization of the schools and the curriculum. Parents in both Bensenville and Gaston County feared that the NAS design teams had rejected traditional education and instead were imposing progressive-style pedagogical schemes on their children. As sociologists Roslyn Arlin Mickelson and Angela Wadsworth argue in their study of the Odyssey Project,

> Gaston County parents wanted specific information regarding strengths, weaknesses, and rationales for the program's innovations, including outcome-based education, authentic assessment, year-round schools, multi-age grouping, and the abolition of traditional grades for student performance. Much of parents' criticism of the curricular and pedagogical innovations revolved around concerns regarding the potential damaging effects on their children's educational and occupational futures .... The absence of course grades, outcome-based education (which they interpreted as a dumbed-down curriculum), the anticipation of "leveling effects" brought about by peer teaching, the Odyssey program's emphasis on technology for instruction and technological (a code word for vocational) education, and the absence of clear college preparatory courses in the Odyssey curriculum suggested to many parents that the Odyssey Project was designed to foreclose college entrance while it reproduced a compliant, trained workforce for local industry.

Parents in Bensenville leveled similar criticisms at the proposed New American Schools program there.[48]

In June 1993, NASDC announced that it would not continue to support either the Bensenville or Gaston County programs.[49]

With their loss NASDC became even more firmly tied to programs designed by nationally prominent educators and successful grant writers. Moreover, the pedagogical aspects of the Bensenville and Gaston County programs to which parents most objected were those rooted in progressive education. These parents, conservative middle-class suburbanites in Bensenville and working-class families in Gastonia, did not believe such things were good for their children's education. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, these developments should have sent a warning to NAS leaders about the politically charged and therefore tenuous nature of such broad efforts at education reform. However good a design might be, and however much money organizations like NASDC might offer, the Bensenville and Gaston County experiences showed that the success of NAS-style reform would ultimately depend on keeping all the stakeholders in the schools and communities committed to change over a long period of time. Given the passions that education politics provoke, these two cases demonstrated that NAS was headed down a difficult and perilous road.

The events in Bensenville and Gaston County did not, however, appear to shake the faith of NASDC leaders in their quest to reinvent America's schools. Indeed, phase one generally had gone well for the other nine design teams. Moreover, NASDC leaders, largely members of the business community, were well aware that any new venture has some failures and losses. More troubling for them at the time were two emerging problems — NASDC's precarious financial situation, and concerns about the organization's survival following the defeat of George Bush by Bill Clinton.

Implementing the Designs

In its first two years of operation, NASDC raised only about $50 million of the projected $200 million that its leaders originally targeted. Following Bill Clinton's election in 1992, concerns about fund-raising deepened due to fears that NASDC was too closely tied to the Bush administration and Republican education policies to get support from the new president. Moreover, as noted earlier, candidate Clinton had specifically criticized key elements of the New American Schools initiative as mere "tinkering."

In May 1993, however, President Clinton unexpectedly declared his support for NASDC, and Secretary of Education Richard Riley stated that the NASDC's reform efforts "dovetailed" nicely with the new administration's education goals and strategies. These statements seemed to be part of an effort by Clinton to demonstrate continuity with at least some of the education policies of the Bush administration. Yet this action was no real stretch for Clinton. He had represented the nation's governors at the 1989 meeting where Bush and the governors adopted the six national goals, and his administration christened its own education program Goals 2000, only a modest variation on Bush's America 2000. Moreover, when Republicans took over Congress in 1994, Clinton had even more reason to support programs that would have appeal on both sides of the aisle. NAS seems to have filled the bill. Whatever Clinton's motivation, the consequences of his endorsement of NASDC eventually proved quite positive for the organization.[50]

Yet it had little immediate effect on fundraising, and some NASDC watchers, particularly education reporters and the program officers of major foundations, began asking whether the organization could remain in business much longer. Indeed, in 1993, NASDC's funding problems had caused two of its design teams, Los Angeles Learning

Centers and the Community Learning Centers of Minnesota, to scale back their efforts substantially. Eventually, NASDC dropped both design teams from the phase three scale-up, although the reasons seemed to have less to do with funding and more to do with the teams' doubtful readiness to participate in the next step of the program at that time. (As noted earlier, Los Angeles Learning Centers later returned to NAS under the new name of Urban Learning Centers.)[51]

In response to the deepening financial problems, the NASDC board elected David T. Kearns as board chair and CEO. Kearns, who had previously served as deputy secretary of education in the Bush administration and CEO of Xerox Corporation, was widely respected in political, education, and business circles. The board hoped he would find ways to shore up the organization's precarious financial situation.[52] In January 1994, these hopes were borne out when philanthropist Walter J. Annenberg donated $50 million to NASDC. Annenberg's grant, which came on top of a $10 million donation that he had given when NASDC began, was a life-saving development for the organization.[53]

The $50 million Annenberg grant did more than just keep NASDC afloat. It enabled the organization to increase greatly its importance and effectiveness in the new political environment. The funds provided what former assistant secretary of education Christopher Cross described as "the critical mass to be really influential." Without these funds it was unlikely that NASDC could have made the crucial transition from its implementation phase in a modest number of individual schools to its broader scale-up phase in states and districts across the country.[54]

A widening role

As a consequence of moving to the scale-up phase, NASDC was assured of playing a highly visible role in school reform nationally. Adding to this increasing national visibility was the fact that NASDC's key scale-up idea — moving from reforming individual schools to transforming entire systems — was at least rhetorically quite similar to the idea of systemic reform that was emerging as one of the cornerstones of the Clinton administration's education policy. NASDC had introduced a variation of systemic reform even before the new administration did. In late 1994, for example, Lynn Olson described NASDC's scale-up phase as moving "beyond the creation of model schools to the transformation of whole systems." As John Anderson, who succeeded Kearns as NASDC CEO, described it, "You can't create places where good schools are the norm without focusing on the system issue."[55]

> NASDC was increasingly looking like a member of the education establishment.

This confluence of NASDC strategies and Clinton policies strengthened NASDC. As Robert B. Schwartz, then director of education programs at the Pew Charitable Trust, commented, "The irony is that, within the context of the Clinton Administration reform strategy, I think the NASDC initiative has a much better chance of taking hold and having some kind of ripple effect."[56] Richard Riley's earlier comment that NASDC's initiatives would dovetail nicely with the new administration's education efforts proved to be prescient.

This support from Clinton and Riley ultimately helped free NASDC from the allegation that it was little more than a partisan GOP initiative. NASDC leaders knew that to survive in the new political environment, the organization had to shake that image. At the time, Peter H. Gerber, director of education programs at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, observed: "It was not very helpful to NASDC to be closely

associated with the Bush administration." By late 1994, however, having garnered endorsements from Clinton and other administration leaders, and having received a strong financial boost from Annenberg, NASDC was better able to present itself as an independent, nonpartisan, and potent reform organization. In the process, however, NASDC also appeared to be distancing itself from its original "revolutionary" free-market approach to education reform and was increasingly looking like a respectable if rather corporate member of the education establishment.[57]

NASDC's goal shifted from creating break-the-mold schools to encouraging break-the-mold systems.

Questions about expansion

With its new funds and status in place, NASDC turned to its biggest challenge: scale-up. Between 1992 and 1995, nine NASDC-supported design teams had implemented their plans in about 150 schools scattered over nineteen states. Phase three called for a dramatic increase in this number, with projections of participating schools reaching into the thousands. NASDC established five criteria for selecting scale-up sites. These required clear commitments from the districts and states that agreed to implement the NAS programs. The most important commitment was creating a "supportive operating environment." Other commitments set forth precisely how to create that supportive environment. Jurisdictions had to agree that at least 30 percent of the schools in the district or state would implement NASDC or other effective school-reform designs within five years; to allocate significant amounts of new resources to schools undergoing these transformations; to gain support for the changes from local educators, the community, and business and political leaders; and to establish relationships with institutions that would continue the reform process should changes occur in local educational and political leadership. In a number of ways, these criteria reflected NASDC's shift in goals from creating individual break-the-mold schools to encouraging break-the-mold systems.[58]

Writing in 1996, David Kearns and John Anderson described the change:

> [I]nnovative, dynamic designs at work in isolated schools — treated as exceptions, operating on the margins, and involving small numbers of students, teachers, and families — are not enough. The problems of the public education system today demand solutions that cut through systems and demonstrate real potential to improve educational outcomes for a significant proportion of American students. However, despite decades of educational reform efforts, there is not one district, much less a state, of any size or diversity in this country where good schools are the norm. The success of the New American Schools rests on changing this fact.[59]

As with every step NASDC had taken thus far, critics questioned aspects of the scale-up program. One of the most potent criticisms concerned the lack of a solid track record of improvement from the NASDC-supported schools. At the time none of the designs had demonstrated that its policies and practices would lead to dramatic improvements in student achievement (although Robert Slavin's Success for All program, the cornerstone of the Roots and Wings initiative, had shown promising results). Critics also questioned how generalizable the scale-up could be, given that all participating schools were self selected and had received waivers from state or district policies in order to become NAS sites. In other words, the fact that the districts and schools had agreed to participate in the scale-up in the first place,

and had gotten state or local waivers in order to be part of the process, by definition made them exceptional. These factors called into question how portable the designs or the scale-up processes might be to other districts around the country.[60]

Finally, some critics, including people who had been early supporters of NASDC, looked at recent developments in the organization, particularly the scale-up plan, and wondered whether the organization was becoming overly cautious and bureaucratic. Chester Finn, Jr., for example, described the scale-up process as "NASDC beginning to act as if it were the government." Finn suggested a more market-oriented approach in which the various design teams would compete amongst themselves wherever they could, not just in predetermined jurisdictions. As Finn put it, the various design teams should be competing "[j]ust as automobile and computer companies do with their designs."[61] This suggestion certainly accorded with NASDC's early reputation as an agile, business-oriented enterprise, but it did not comport with the organization's new image or direction.

> NASDC reformers were discovering how slow and difficult changing schools is.

Questions about capacity

NASDC brushed off these criticisms and focused on the challenge of scale-up. As 1995 began, the organization was reviewing forty applications from various jurisdictions that hoped to participate. By early March, NASDC leaders had winnowed these down to fewer than a dozen. Ultimately agreements were reached with the states of Kentucky and Maryland and eight large urban districts: Cincinnati, Dade County (Miami), Los Angeles, Memphis, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Diego, and Seattle (and a group of contiguous school systems). In 1996, Los Angeles dropped out of the program and San Antonio joined. In 1997, Broward County, Florida, was added. These districts committed to all the criteria that NASDC had established and agreed to implement programs developed by the remaining seven design teams.

As NASDC entered its scale-up phase, the enterprise appeared to be in very good shape. Yet some major challenges loomed, challenges anticipated by researchers from the RAND Corporation in studies they had done on phase two. NASDC had been working with RAND almost from its inception. NASDC leaders saw RAND as a widely respected organization that could conduct dispassionate research on all aspects of the NASDC reform effort. The initial RAND reports appeared in 1995 and 1996. Though generally positive about the beginning stages of the initiative, they highlighted several problems that had emerged during the demonstration phase. As it turned out, these same problems would grow in complexity as NASDC scaled up the designs in new jurisdictions and in many more schools.

The first RAND study sought to establish baseline data for future assessments. Its primary finding was that NASDC *had* succeeded in developing "the capacity of a diverse set of teams and designs to effect school reform." However, given the differences in emphasis among the designs — some, for example, focused on fairly narrow changes such as instruction and curriculum while others sought to introduce broader reforms in such areas as school governance — the RAND researchers predicted uneven rates of implementation in phase three. Due to this uneven pace, they argued, expectations should also vary about the progress the teams would make in scale-up.[62]

In the second RAND study, lead researcher Susan Bodilly provided evidence to support those conclusions. After examining

the progress of the nine teams involved in phase two, she found that three of the four design teams that emphasized a somewhat narrow set of reforms (e.g., changes in instruction, curriculum, standards, assessments, and professional development) had put in place more than half the elements of their designs. (These teams were Audrey Cohen, Co-NECT, and Roots and Wings.) Of the teams that sought to introduce broader changes, however, only the Modern Red Schoolhouse had similar success. In short, this study found that five of the nine design teams that took part in phase two had failed to realize basic implementation goals.[63]

Bodilly argued that, to a considerable degree, "[t]he differences in progress were closely associated with several factors: team readiness or capacity at the beginning of the NASDC effort, the type of design and approach to development chosen by the team, and the implementation strategy used to infuse the design into schools." Generally, Bodilly found that teams that concentrated on changing "core elements of schooling appeared to have the highest payoff. Sites floundered when they took on too much too soon."[64]

> Would NAS-supported schools continue to receive support if they failed to show improvement on state tests?

Bodilly also identified a large number of other variables that influenced the experience of the teams. These included the short amount of time that NASDC allotted to the demonstration phase (two years); the amount of preimplementation communication between the design teams and the schools; the degree of fit between the design, the schools, and the school system; the extent of support from teacher's unions; the degree of professional autonomy that teachers were willing to assume; and the level of commitment made by local education leaders to the reforms. In essence, the NASDC reformers were discovering how slow and difficult the process of changing schools is and how hard reform is to sustain. As Bodilly put it,

> At the end of Phase 2...teams and schools began to focus more on permanent systemic changes needed to promote and sustain the design in the school without continued intervention by the team. Thus, without necessarily meaning to, all teams arrived at a point where they became concerned with governance challenges, improved social services, increased public engagement, and new school staffing and organization.[65]

Mismatch with state assessments

The third RAND demonstration-phase study surveyed principals within NASDC-supported schools. It provided an excellent example of Bodilly's insight, highlighting the rocky status of these new marriages between innovative designs and state and district policies and programs. A "large majority" of the principals surveyed in the study reported that "standardized, multiple-choice tests [required for state and district accountability] are misaligned with the classroom practices of reforming schools and that traditional tests do not address the knowledge, skills, and behaviors innovative programs seek to promote." This criticism — that state-mandated tests do not properly evaluate what is going on in schools — has become common among educators in recent years, and such criticism is often warranted. Yet some of the principals of the NASDC-supported schools were voicing a more pointed concern, namely that there was a mismatch between the student-centered approaches of the design teams and the more traditional evaluation practices used by states and districts. One principal described that mismatch in classic progressive terms, declaring that the problem with traditional tests was that "[w]e have gone from a factory approach to a

child-centered model of learning." Another principal derided the state test because it "is more basic-skills oriented and we are doing bigger things than that with our designs. We are trying to be good thinkers."[66] These arguments resemble the belief articulated by Rugg and Shumaker above, namely that progressive schools "concentrate on understanding, on independent thinking, on critical judgment. The end sought is not the storing up of facts, but the development of the power to think." In essence, the principals' stand echoed claims made by progressive educators for decades, i.e., that their schools ought not be measured by traditional tests because such tests only assess how well students have "stored up facts." They also reflect the attitudes of some of the creators of the original NASDC designs. The authors of the ATLAS proposal, for example, stated, "ATLAS schools will not rely on traditional testing because these methods warp teaching toward the delivery of disconnected information."[67]

The problem with this argument, both in the Progressive Era and today, is that if progressive methods are better at getting students to master subject matter, why wouldn't traditional tests demonstrate such mastery as well as tests more specifically aligned to progressive methods? In addition, would NAS-supported schools continue to receive political and moral support from parents, educational leaders, teachers, and community members if they failed to show improvement on state-or district-mandated tests?

Challenges multiply

In all, the findings of the RAND studies pointed to two important questions that would continue to challenge NASDC and the design teams in phase three. Could the design teams stay focused on what they did best and avoid becoming embroiled in outside situations that would sap their time and energy? If Bodilly was correct, the more the teams with narrowly focused programs had to wrestle with broader systemic issues, the less time they would have to implement the things that they could do effectively. These findings seemed to support the idea that to be successful, education change has to be straightforward, clearly targeted, and incremental. From this perspective, most education reform fails because it overreaches, especially in such areas as reinventing schools. Some scholars such as Maris Vinovskis have argued that an overemphasis on comprehensive or systemic reform might preclude trying less ambitious strategies that could prove equally or more effective.[68]

The problems of overreaching in terms of reinventing schools become even more complicated when the political nature of such reform is considered. School reform simply cannot move faster than the community is willing to allow, nor can it succeed if it moves too far from what parents, teachers, and community members believe about schooling, i.e., if reform challenges what sociologist Mary Haywood Metz has called "real school." For example, rather than seeking education revolutions, parents across the country have consistently reported that their key concerns about education are safety for their children, discipline, and mastering basic skills.[69]

A 1995 survey of parents in the NASDC jurisdictions of Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Diego, Seattle, Kentucky, and Maryland provided an important glimpse into parental attitudes and an insightful perspective on the problems NASDC faced in selling its whole-school designs. Conducted by the Education Commission of the States in conjunction with NASDC, the survey found that people in the communities targeted by NASDC were deeply divided about reform, with 41 percent of respondents agreeing that the schools in their districts needed a "complete overhaul" and 51 percent declaring that the schools needed "only minor tuning." When asked about the "directions such changes should take," the disagreements were even sharper. Over a third of the respondents wanted "the best of new and

innovative methods"; just under a third wanted "tried and true" basics, "and the remaining third thought there should be a combination of old and new methods."[70] Without question, getting such communities to commit to long-range plans for whole-school transformations was a formidable challenge.

The second problem the RAND researchers identified was how NASDC and its design teams would respond to a process of change that was slower, more incremental, and more political than they had expected. The demonstration phase indicated that NASDC's original perspective was simplistic, even naive. NASDC could not simply apply the business metaphor — "develop and test a new product and then go sell it" — to education change.[71] In a later study, Bodilly summed up the key findings from phase two in this way:

> The single strongest lesson learned from the demonstration experience was that the designs, by themselves, could not transform schools. Schools could not simply open an envelope with design specifications inside and transform themselves. Rather, schools needed significant amounts of professional development and materials geared to the designs. Thus, the designs and their implementation assistance packages were the important products developed in the demonstration phase.[72]

People in communities targeted by NASDC were deeply divided.

NASDC was discovering that school reform, particularly whole-school reform, was arduous work involving a host of stakeholders whose different and often conflicting motives, agendas, and concerns impacted every aspect of the reform effort. By 1995, NASDC leaders rarely spoke about creating break-the-mold schools, and the words "educational revolution" had disappeared entirely. To a considerable degree, the harsh realities of education change were forcing the tough-minded business leaders of this initiative to adapt and adjust their approach and their expectations.

Scaling up and Scaling back

The scale-up phase has been a period of significant transition for the entire NASDC enterprise. Since mid-1995, the organization has initiated both modest changes, such as adopting its new name (New American Schools) and major undertakings, including dramatically increasing the number of schools using its designs. In addition, phase three ushered in a profound change in the relation of NAS to the federal government because in 1997, the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program — better known as the Obey-Porter amendment — was signed into law. During the debate on this amendment, which was designed to provide federal funds for schools to adopt "proven" school-reform designs, supporters identified NAS as an exemplary program. In fact, the final version of the amendment included all seven NAS designs in a list of reform initiatives that would qualify for these funds. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, NAS has gradually changed from being the primary funding source of the design teams to a service-providing agency that aids the teams as they transform themselves into self-sustaining organizations. Related to this effort were initiatives to create supportive reform environments in the jurisdictions where NAS teams were working.[73] All of these developments have pointed in two interrelated directions — NAS becoming

increasingly influential in shaping national education policy and increasingly effective in promoting its designs. By the late 1990s, NAS had largely shed its image as an outsider and become instead an important part of the nation's education power elite.

The name change offered a small but significant glimpse into this transformation. The shift from the New American Schools Development Corporation to New American Schools was explained at the time as "symbolizing [the organization's] move from development to scale-up design."[74] More significant than the name change was the dramatic expansion of NAS efforts. Phase two ended in mid-1995 with 148 schools implementing designs from the various NAS teams. By mid-1997, two years into phase three, that number had climbed to 553.[75]

A home in Memphis

One of the most important aspects of the scale-up was the nature of the schools and districts that had engaged the design teams. Contrary to predictions of liberal critics that NAS would ignore the needs of urban and minority youth, virtually all of the jurisdictions that NAS chose for the scale-up phase were low-achieving, urban districts, serving mostly poor and minority youngsters. One RAND study of a sample of NAS schools found that, on average, 55 percent of the students in these schools qualified for free or reduced-price lunches compared with a third of all students nationwide. Though NAS might be faulted for choosing to scale-up only in self-selected districts that were amenable to reform, the districts it chose were not places where success would be assured or even likely. Indeed, almost all of the NAS scale-up districts were confronting the most serious types of education problems in the land.[76]

> Virtually all the jurisdictions NAS chose were urban districts.

Memphis represented the kind of district in which NAS-supported schools were taking root. In 1997, it was the twenty-first largest school district in the country. Over 80 percent of its 111,000 students were African American, and over 60 percent of the students qualified for free or reduced-price school lunches. According to *Education Week's* Lynn Olson, "Only 40 percent of the school system's 9th graders met the standards for the state's minimum-competency test."

By 1997, Memphis had almost reached the NAS goal of having 30 percent of its schools (actually 48 of its approximately 160 schools) adopting some form of whole-school design. Superintendent Naomi "Gerry" House was determined to use this approach to transform the entire system. Her determination and the rapid pace of change in the city led Johns Hopkins research scientist Samuel Stringfield, who was closely monitoring both NAS and developments in Memphis, to declare, "The Memphis school district is the best example this country has to offer of a district embracing school reform." Indeed, by 1997, educators from across the nation and around the world were visiting the city to witness its dramatic changes.[77]

More important than the number of Memphis schools implementing the designs and the good publicity the district received from its commitment to reform was the encouraging news about student achievement that appeared in 1998. A study conducted by researchers at the University of Memphis, the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, and Johns Hopkins provided "the first hard evidence of learning gains in schools that have adopted designs sponsored by New American Schools." The study compared twenty-five schools that implemented NAS designs in 1995-96 with a control group of schools that had not adopted the reforms. The researchers found "significantly greater gains" in the redesigned schools than in the nation as a whole and in comparable but unreformed

schools in the Memphis district. University of Memphis education professor Steven M. Ross, who was the primary author of the study, declared that these findings "provide strong evidence that the redesign initiatives are having a positive impact on student learning." Ross added that these developments ran counter to what the teachers in the redesigned schools had anticipated. Like the principals discussed earlier, the teachers feared that the "hands-on, project-based" approach of most designs would not prepare the students well for standardized state tests. Instead, the findings seemed to confirm the faith of the reformers that these approaches could boost achievement even on traditional exams.[78]

Metamorphosis

This news on achievement could not have come at a better time for NAS and its design teams. By mid-1997, NAS was well into a metamorphosis that made such good news essential. NAS was becoming more of a clearinghouse than an initiator of reform and was changing the design teams into market-oriented purveyors of educational improvement. In addition, during this period the relationship between NAS and the federal government shifted, as NAS designs became eligible for substantial federal dollars following the 1997 passage of the Obey-Porter amendment.

In his RAND study summarizing the first six years of NAS, Thomas Glennan, Jr., compared the changing relationship of NAS and the design teams to parents preparing their offspring to leave the nest. While continuing to aid the development and implementation of the designs during the early part of phase three, NAS increasingly focused on helping the teams become self-sufficient organizations capable of marketing and supporting their products. This was a very difficult transition for all in involved.

As Glennan put it,

> The importance of the teams becoming self-sufficient means NAS has taken on qualities of a venture capitalist, investing in the development of new products and service in new organizations. However, it did not begin with this perspective. In choosing the organizations in which to invest, it gave very little attention to their underlying financial and management capabilities … It invested in the development of a product but, until the past two years, paid little attention to other capabilities of the enterprise necessary to its success.[79]

Design teams had to be weaned away from NAS funds.

This meant that the design teams had to be weaned away from NAS funds and become fee-for-service organizations that would sell their wares to various jurisdictions around the country. For some teams, this change was relatively painless. Success for All, the parent organization of Roots and Wings, was already a fee-for-service institution with substantial experience in this area. But others, such as the Modern Red Schoolhouse, which was created in response to the NASDC RFP, had virtually no business or marketing experience. Thus, during phase three, NAS began sending financial and marketing experts to the design teams to help them develop business plans and marketing strategies. At the same time, NAS began addressing the problem of creating markets for the designs.[80]

Obey-Porter to the rescue

In creating these markets, the most immediate problem for NAS and the teams was finding funds that districts could use to pay for the services that the teams provided. Since design-team fees for the first year of implementation alone could range from about $50,000 to over $500,000, locating sources of

additional money that school districts could use to pay for these services was crucial to the survival of the NAS initiatives. This effort was especially crucial given that so many of the clients targeted by NAS were low-performing and financially strapped urban systems.[81]

As has often been the case in the history of modern American education, the funding solution was found in Washington. Help came in the form of an amendment to the fiscal 1998 appropriation bill for the U.S. Department of Education. The amendment was sponsored by Reps. David Obey (D-WI) and John Porter (R-IL), who were frustrated by the lack of progress in traditional Title I programs. The amendment provided about $150 million ($120 million of which came from Title I) for competitive grants to aid schools in adopting whole-school models of change that had proven to be effective in boosting the achievement of poor children.[82] Officially known as the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program, but more often referred to simply as "Obey-Porter," the amendment provided individual schools up to $50,000 for adopting "research-based, school-wide" reform programs. As part of the Title I program, the amendment specifically slated the funds to help improve the achievement of poor children. The assumption behind Obey-Porter was that a critical mass of well-proven, comprehensive school-reform initiatives existed in the country and that school districts needed a financial impetus to adopt them. The Obey-Porter definition of a comprehensive design was a nearly perfect fit with the NAS designs. It included such elements as "effective research-based methods and strategies; comprehensive design with aligned components; professional development; measurable goals and benchmarks; support within the school; [and] parental and community involvement." Not surprisingly, NASDC was a strong supporter of Obey-Porter and lobbied Congress on its behalf.[83]

> It appeared as if NAS and Obey-Porter were parts of a mutual admiration society.

Indeed, it appeared as if NASDC and the supporters of Obey-Porter were part of a mutual admiration society. Throughout the debate about the amendment, its supporters, including President Clinton and Secretary Riley, cited the NAS designs as representative of the kinds of programs that they hoped school districts would adopt. More important, the amendment eventually included a list of seventeen such programs, seven of which were the NAS designs; an eighth, Urban Learning Centers, was an original NASDC grantee that remained strongly linked to NAS. While the list has become controversial due to the implication that these seventeen were federally approved programs, its benefits for NAS were considerable.[84] As a result of providing funding to help school districts pay for NAS and other designs and of highlighting NAS designs as exemplary, Obey-Porter greatly expedited the NAS effort to create markets for its teams.

Thickening bonds with government

Obey-Porter clearly marked a significant change in the relationship between NAS and the federal government, but significant in what ways? Writing in 1996, David T. Kearns and John L. Anderson stated that the NASDC "effort was founded by private sector leaders with a promise to neither request or accept any governmental funding." On the surface, it appears that, by lobbying for the amendment, NAS leaders were breaking that promise. Yet in actuality, NAS support for Obey-Porter did not contradict the pledge. Given that Obey-Porter funds were mandated to go directly to school districts that, in turn, would use them to purchase the services of various design teams, NAS itself did not benefit directly from the federal largesse.

Indeed, one could view Obey-Porter as helping NAS fulfill the role it had originally been assigned in the Bush administration, namely acting as a privately funded R&D agency whose designs would be implemented in a group of schools that received federal start-up funds. Obey-Porter was quite different from the America 2000 proposal to create 535 model schools, but its results were similar in practice. NAS and other nongovernmental reform organizations would supply the designs, and the federal government would support the start-up costs for their implementation. Yet if Obey-Porter aided NAS in fulfilling an important goal, it also indicated that NAS was changing from an agency committed to operating outside the constraints of Washington into one that depended on Washington for the success of its venture. Now, like other institutions comprising the Washington education establishment, NAS required federal funds to keep its programs operating.[85]

> When Obey-Porter was enacted, none of the NAS designs could provide evidence of effectiveness.

The most troubling aspect of Obey-Porter, and, by implication, of the new role played by NAS design teams in education reform, was not the dependency on federal funding. Rather, it was the claims of "proven effectiveness" for the designs. With the possible exception of Roots and Wings, at the time that Obey-Porter was enacted none of the NAS designs could provide substantial evidence of effectiveness in improving achievement. For example, as of 1998, all of the NAS RAND studies had focused on the *implementation* of the design teams' programs, not on their educational outcomes. This focus made perfect sense given the relatively brief time that NAS and most of the design teams had been in existence. But these studies did not prove that the NAS designs were successful in lifting student achievement. The Memphis study noted earlier was one of very few inquiries that provided any evidence of success, but it looked only at small sample of schools in a single district over a brief period of time. In short, most of the NAS designs had not been around long enough to warrant their placement on a list of "proven" programs. Commenting on the effectiveness of *all* of the programs in the Obey-Porter list, educational researcher Herbert Walberg stated, "Very few have any evidence at all, and especially evidence that is independent of developers. This kind of screening would never be acceptable in medicine."[86]

Implementation examined

In 1998 and 1999, several studies underscored the problem of inadequate data regarding not only the NAS designs, but most of the other programs on the Obey-Porter list as well. The first of these, by Susan Bodilly, was another in the series of RAND inquiries into the NAS designs. Like the earlier RAND studies, it concentrated on implementation issues, in this case focusing on forty schools in seven of the NAS jurisdictions two years into the process. This study highlighted Bodilly's findings from her earlier work, namely that due to the numerous stakeholders and variables involved in the process, whole-school reform was slow and difficult. Following on the heels of Obey-Porter, this study was a sobering reminder of the challenges that lay ahead for districts seeking to implement whole-school designs. As Bodilly put it in an interview, "We're basically, in our analysis, providing a cautionary tale about how difficult it is to grow reform quickly . . . Don't think that you can just buy this off-the-shelf technology, plug it into a school, and then things will improve. Much of it depends on the schools and the districts themselves."[87]

Specifically, Bodilly found that over half of the thirty-three schools that had been working on implementation for two years had

successfully put in place core elements of the designs (meaning that either a majority of teachers was implementing the elements or that it had become institutionalized). About 45 percent of the schools had not reached that stage in the two years. The remaining seven schools in the sample had been working on implementation for only one year, and, of these, three were at the "piloting phase" and four were still planning. A host of reasons explained this uneven progress, including political and leadership upheavals in some districts, an often hurried pace in the original process of selecting designs, difficulties between design teams and school personnel, the quality of communication between designers and educators, and the nature of the designs themselves.

"If whole-school reforms practiced truth-in-advertising, even the best would warn: 'Works if implemented. Implementation varies.'"

Bodilly argued her findings from this study could lead to two very different interpretations:

> If one is familiar with past reform efforts or with the difficulties of complex organizational change in the public sector, these results probably look quite positive. Seeing any movement at all in a two-year period, other than the adoption of a small program or adoption by some part of the school, can be considered strong progress. For those used to command-based organization or to organizations free from the influence of local politics, these results might be frustrating, even bleak.[88]

Yet even if one accepted the interpretation that substantial progress had been made, it was impossible to ignore the key theme that ran through the study, namely that achieving whole-school reform was arduous. Implementing the designs demanded unrelenting attention to multiple independent variables, any one of which could suddenly become aberrant and threaten the entire enterprise. Bodilly came away from the study stating, "I think the idea of supporting comprehensive school reform is the way to go. [However] so much is going to depend on how states choose to manage this effort, and whether they choose to add burdensome processes or to support good practice."[89]

Bodilly's research was one piece in a larger body of literature focused on challenges in implementing whole-school designs generally. In an insightful 1999 article, Lynn Olson summarized this literature, declaring, "If whole-school reforms practiced truth-in-advertising, even the best would carry a warning like this: 'Works if implemented. Implementation varies.'" Olson found that "implementation is often problematic and inconsistent, even at school sites that are listed as exemplars." Besides dealing with multiple variables and stakeholders, whole-school design teams faced problems because at times they were committed to contradictory elements in the school-reform process. Rebecca Herman, project director of the American Institutes of Research (AIR) study *An Educator's Guide to Schoolwide Reform*, the first major study to look at a wide range of whole-school reform programs, described that situation with the following example: "On the one hand, they want teachers to feel ownership of a design and to be able to shape what it looks like in their school. On the other hand, they want to maintain enough integrity for the design to remain intact." Such challenges led some researchers to conclude that reforming "some deeply troubled schools" might have to "start simple, with less comprehensive programs focused on building the teaching capacity to ensure basic skills." Only then might reformers take more ambitious steps.[90]

Effectiveness questioned

Yet even as researchers examined the problems of implementation, one persistent question continued to echo: Do successfully implemented designs necessarily guarantee improvements in educational achievement? As noted above, many thoughtful individuals who had closely followed the NAS initiative assumed that this was the case. Susan Bodilly, for example, asserted that comprehensive school reform "is the way to go," and Lynn Olson argued that whole-school reform "works if implemented." Yet as late as 1999, there was precious little evidence that those assumptions were warranted.

> With no data on achievement, one wonders about the research and evaluation component of the initiative.

The first study to try to tackle the question of how effective whole-school reform was in terms of improving student achievement was the 1999 AIR study *An Educator's Guide to Schoolwide Reform* (noted above). It examined twenty-four whole-school reform programs, including all the NAS designs and the nine other programs on the "approved" Obey-Porter list. The report was labeled by *Education Week* as "the most important rating of such programs by an independent research group." Commissioned by five major education organizations (including two national teachers' unions), the study began by noting: "Much has been written lately about schoolwide programs, those efforts that promise to improve student learning by changing the entire school. Most of the prose describing these efforts remains uncomfortably silent about their effectiveness." In investigating effectiveness, the study found that, while some whole-school designs appeared to have potential for improving student achievement, at the time only a few programs had demonstrated the kinds of results their supporters originally had forecast. The most important finding was "that only a few approaches have documented their positive effects on student achievement."[91]

Specifically, the AIR study rated only three designs as having "strong" positive effects on student achievement: Direct Instruction, High Schools that Work, and Success for All, none of which were NAS designs. Of the eight NAS programs (including Urban Learning Centers), AIR rated Expeditionary Learning as "promising" and Roots and Wings as only "marginal" in boosting achievement. AIR gave all the other NAS designs a "no research" rating on achievement mainly because none had amassed enough data for such an evaluation. The "no research" rating did not seem to trouble the NAS designs teams. The response to this rating from a spokesperson for the Audrey Cohen program probably represented the views of many of the NAS-supported efforts: "[W]e are a younger design team. To leap to a conclusion about our potential or our effectiveness is premature."[92]

The problem with that response was that the AIR study had been conducted fully five years after the NAS teams began implementing their designs in dozens of schools across the country. Over that time there should have been a considerable amount of data on the relationship between the various designs and achievement in those schools. If there really were no data on that relationship, then one would have to wonder about the larger research and evaluation component of the NAS initiative.

Arguing over evaluation

Another glimpse into this apparent problem with research and evaluation appeared in June 1999, when NAS president John Anderson published a "Commentary" column in *Education Week* that challenged the AIR study as inadequate. While Anderson praised the study as "admirable" in its intentions, he maintained that it was flawed

in its approach and its conclusions. "Not surprisingly," he argued,

> AIR took a traditional approach, gathering the relatively small body of published research on the programs as its evidence of effectiveness. But this sort of reliance on limited and often time-consuming research as a way of assessing comprehensive designs may be outmoded. What is called for is a new approach to holding educational innovation accountable.

"Reliance on limited and often time-consuming research as a way of assessing comprehensive designs may be outmoded."

Throughout the column Anderson reiterated the idea that "traditional" evaluation took too long, ignored data on progress that schools were gathering almost on a daily basis, and, in any case, was too limited by small sample sizes to provide a complete picture of design-based reform in a national setting. As he put it, "Even the most careful research on a handful of campuses and a handful of matched schools could not give us a picture of what happens when models are used in hundreds of schools." Moreover, Anderson seemed troubled by the attention AIR gave to student achievement in making its assessments. While he recognized that student performance should be part of any evaluation of whole-school reform, he felt it needed to be viewed in the context of such reform, not as a single, isolated item. "Beyond academic results," he asserted, "design teams should be judged on other practices involving their relationship with schools and school districts. Practices involving implementation, communication, and data collection are all vital to viable campus change."[93]

Anderson's response to the AIR report was interesting in several respects. Most importantly, he seemed to conflate the process of evaluating data about operation of the programs with the process of evaluating data on improving student achievement. Anderson's position was akin to saying that if a software company introduced an innovative production process that efficiently turned out exciting new programs, evaluations of those programs were "outmoded" if they ignored the production process and focused instead on whether the resulting software was actually useful for the people who purchased it. Moreover, by questioning what he termed "traditional" evaluation methods for assessing the designs, particularly the use of representative samples for research into broad phenomena, Anderson seemed to be questioning one of the fundamentals of social science research.

In addition, in doubting traditional forms of evaluation, he seemed to be echoing concerns of early-twentieth-century progressive educators and, more recently, the principals of NAS-supported schools (cited earlier), who argued that traditional testing could not accurately assess the type of education going on in their schools. Was Anderson implying that the NAS designs were so novel that traditional approaches to research could not capture what they were doing? Was he questioning all traditional external review of the NAS programs? Finally, despite his concerns about traditional evaluation practices, Anderson cited traditionally derived student achievement data from Memphis as evidence that the designs in that city were working. Indeed, over the next year Memphis continued to be cited as the stellar example of NAS success.[94]

Mixed reviews, continued growth

If Anderson feared that the AIR report would have serious repercussions for NAS,

developments over the next year should have dispelled such concerns. In March 2000, for example, NAS announced the creation of a new "$15.7 million fund to provide loans and technical assistance to the providers of research-based, whole-school designs and to school districts putting the designs into place." Supported by grants and other funds from the U.S. Department of Education, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and Prudential Insurance Company, this fund was another important step in the NAS strategy to create markets for its design teams. In fact, due to NAS marketing efforts and other factors such as Obey-Porter funds, during the scale-up phase the NAS experienced impressive increases in the number of schools involved with the initiative. According to *Education Week*, in 2001, some 3,000 schools nationwide were using NAS designs, a more than fivefold increase since 1997.[95]

Efforts to evaluate the NAS designs during this period of expansive growth continued apace. Despite John Anderson's concerns about traditional evaluation strategies, NAS continued to support RAND's carefully designed research on schools involved in the NAS initiative. Early in 2001, RAND published another in its series of NAS studies that not only investigated the implementation process, but for the first time examined student performance resulting from the designs. The study was based on a sample of schools in eight of the NAS scale-up jurisdictions (Cincinnati, Dade County [Miami], Memphis, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Antonio, Kentucky, and Washington State).[96]

As with previous RAND studies, the researchers uncovered considerable variation regarding implementation. Generally they found that schools made steady progress in the first year of implementation, but in schools "that had been implementing for two or more years in 1997" the degree of implementation appeared to have reached a plateau. Whether this leveling off meant the schools were losing their enthusiasm for reform or were increasingly comfortable with and relaxed about it was unclear. What was clear was that elementary schools, smaller schools, and schools with strong principals were the most successful in implementing the designs. Differences in jurisdictions also played a role. The RAND researchers found higher levels of implementation "in those districts that were more supportive of the NAS designs and characterized by stability of district leadership (e.g., Memphis)." As with previous RAND studies, this one also found that design teams with the most experience in reform and those with core programs such as Roots and Wings fared better in implementation than more comprehensive programs such as the Modern Red Schoolhouse.[97]

Dramatic achievement gains were not made.

The first-time data on performance were equally mixed. The study focused on "whether NAS schools made gains in test scores relative to their respective jurisdictions." In general, the researchers declared, "Dramatic achievement gains were not made, although some designs fared better than others." Specifically, they found that 50 percent or more of the NAS schools in Cincinnati, Memphis, Miami, and Kentucky showed improvement in mathematics, while 50 percent or more of the schools in Cincinnati, Philadelphia, San Antonio, and Washington improved in reading. When looking at all of the schools in the sample, the study's results were slightly worse. "In total," the researchers wrote, "of the 163 schools for which we have data allowing us to compare performance relative to the district or state, 81 schools (50 percent) made gains relative to the district in mathematics and 76 schools (46 percent) made gains in reading."[98]

In comparing student achievement by design teams, the RAND researchers

identified Roots and Wings as "the most consistent" design, "with 10 out of 21 schools making progress in both reading and mathematics relative to the district." The Modern Red Schoolhouse design, which had eleven schools in the sample, did even better, with seven of its schools improving in math and eight in reading. Other designs showed considerable variation. Of the Audrey Cohen schools, for example, five out of eight schools improved in math but only two in reading. Similarly, nine of twenty-four ATLAS schools and only four of sixteen Expeditionary Learning schools improved in math, while fifteen of the former and eight of the latter improved in reading.[99]

In all, the RAND researchers neither despaired nor celebrated. In their conclusion, they noted that the 1991 NASDC RFP declared that the organization was "not interested in incremental changes that promise, at best, modest improvements in student achievement compared to conventional classrooms or schools."[100] Yet the inescapable finding from this study was that, despite millions of dollars and enormous effort, over the course of a decade what NAS had brought about was at best incremental change and modest achievement gains.

> After six years and $12 million, Memphis students showed virtually no gains.

However, the RAND researchers did not believe that this lukewarm assessment told the whole story:

> From another perspective, one might view the findings . . . with cautious optimism. The results that suggest some design teams have worked with challenging schools, implemented their designs at relatively higher levels, and experienced achievement gains imply that some NAS designs hold promise for improving the achievement of students attending high poverty schools in urban areas of this nation.

As with other RAND studies, this one underscored the difficulties and complexities associated with whole-school reform. Success, the researchers stated, would in large part depend on "perseverance on the part of the teachers and a great deal of support from the NAS, the design teams, and perhaps most importantly, the districts."[101]

The Memphis blues

The accuracy of this last comment became painfully apparent not long after the RAND study was published. On June 18, 2001, NAS was hit with the most serious setback in its history when Johnnie Watson, superintendent of the Memphis City Schools, announced to "a stunned school board" that he was abandoning the district's six-year involvement with whole-school reform. Since 1995, when Watson's predecessor, Gerry House, had brought her city's schools into the NAS orbit, Memphis was regularly cited as the city that was implementing whole-school reform in the right way. Moreover, following early reports of improved student achievement in redesigned schools, Memphis also seemed to be the place where the NAS and other designs were working as predicted. By 1999, House was one of the most honored urban school superintendents in the nation, and Memphis was an international showcase for whole-school reform.[102]

Yet in the spring of 2000, when Watson took over from House, he found a deeply troubled district. In the late 1990s, House had mandated that *all* of its more than 160 schools adopt a reform model, a policy that angered and alienated many teachers. Amid growing complaints, and with mounting evidence of poor student performance on state achievement tests, in November 2000 Watson ordered an internal study of how well

whole-school reform was actually doing in the district. The study found that after six years of reform and some $12 million spent, Memphis students showed virtually no gains and in some cases declines in state test scores in mathematics, reading, and English. This finding was not entirely unexpected even by the NAS. According to the 2001 RAND report on student performance, Stephen M. Ross, the University of Memphis researcher who conducted the earlier study that showed dramatic gains in achievement, produced another study in 1999 that found only "small, nonsignificant advantages" in achievement when comparing design-based and traditional schools. Not surprisingly, this study had received far less attention then the earlier one, yet it should have signaled that something was amiss in the reform program.[103]

The failure of NAS to establish clear, replicable ways to measure progress was an important shortcoming.

The internal Memphis study went beyond aggregate data on student achievement in the district as a whole. It also looked closely at the performance of all of the design-based schools in the district. The study discovered that only three of the eighteen reform models implemented in the city had boosted student achievement. None of the three successful models was an NAS design. Indeed, one NAS design, ATLAS, which had been implemented in four schools, was singled out as having "the most negative impact" on student achievement of any of the reform models. The report found that even Success for All, which was being used in almost 25 percent of the Memphis schools, performed poorly.[104]

Evidence of weak pupil achievement was not the only factor involved in Watson's decision to end rather than mend the program. The Memphis study also included a survey that questioned almost forty-six hundred of the seven thousand teachers, administrators, and staff members in the district about their experience with the reforms. In addition, researchers brought together ten focus groups of teachers and administrators to review the effort. The survey and focus groups found that, while some Memphis educators firmly endorsed key goals and elements of the designs, many more felt burdened and overwhelmed by the reform process. Teachers complained about too little professional development, too many meetings, and too much paperwork. As one teacher put it, "A lot more hands-on work would have been done with the students if we weren't so focused on getting the paperwork done." After Watson made his decision to end the program, one teacher told him simply, "Thank you for letting us teach." Apparently there was also a widespread feeling that the reforms "strayed too far from basics in a district where too many students [were] below grade level." Other factors listed as contributing to the teachers' disenchantment were poor leadership by principals, a mandate by the central administration that schools adopt reform models whether they wanted to or not, and a lack of resources to support necessary changes. As the president of the Memphis Education Association observed, "For a long time now, teachers in Memphis city schools have been trying to relay a message that these models just weren't working." Put simply, the teachers did not buy into the reform process. University of Memphis researcher Stephen M. Ross summed up the situation: "The big mistake Memphis made was all the teachers weren't on board."[105]

Measurement woes

But there may have been another important shortcoming at the heart of the Memphis debacle, the failure of NAS to establish clear, replicable ways to measure the progress of students in NAS-supported schools from the

beginning. In all, between 1998 and 2001, researchers conducted four separate studies of student achievement in Memphis. Each found something different. Ross's 1998 study reported that NAS-supported schools made substantial improvement on standardized test scores compared to non-redesigned schools. His 1999 study, however, found little difference between redesigned and non-redesigned schools. The 2001 RAND study that examined student performance in a number of NAS jurisdictions found that "Among the 30 NAS schools [in the Memphis sample], a little over half made gains relative to the district in math . . . and 11 of the 30 schools made gains in reading." In short, there was some progress in math, but not much progress in reading. The recent internal study by the district researchers did not even find that much improvement. After examining test scores across the six years of reform, they found stagnation or decline.[106]

Why were these findings so different? This is not just an arcane question about research design. Rather, it goes to the heart of the concerns discussed earlier about the weak evaluation component of NAS generally. Only a well-designed research program that evaluated student performance in the restructured schools over time could have provided the consistent, reliable data that supporters and detractors of the NAS initiative should have considered in determining the future of the program. Without such research, the political elements of NAS-style reform effort became more pronounced.

The RAND studies have consistently shown that maintaining long-term support for reform is one of the most difficult challenges in this enterprise. If the NAS designs *are* effective in producing achievement gains, then rigorous, well-designed studies of student progress will help convince parents, teachers, and community members to stick with the reforms. Similarly, if the reforms fall short of their promises, as they apparently did in Memphis, then such research can signal to school leaders when it is time to cut their losses by ending the experiments.[107]

In many ways, these developments reinforce the idea that Memphis was an exemplary site for examining whole-school reform. During the House years, the city was, in the words of one commentator cited earlier, "the best example this country has to offer of a district embracing school reform." Yet less than a year into the Watson era, Memphis became the best example in the country of the tenuous nature of such reform.

How important is the rejection of whole-school reform in Memphis? What impact will this decision have on the future of NAS? While it is certainly too soon to offer definitive answers to these questions, it seems likely that NAS will weather this storm, although its momentum might be somewhat slowed. The flow of Obey-Porter and, increasingly, Title 1 funds to support whole-school reform as a cure for the ills of urban schools will sustain NAS and its design teams for many years to come. Whole-school change may be one of the most, if not *the* most, important educational reform effort in the nation today.

Going national

Indeed, as whole-school reform has become increasingly popular, NAS has sought for itself an even greater role as national leader of this initiative. Recognizing the enormous potential for expanding the use of whole-school designs, in the last year and a half NAS introduced a series of new initiatives to encourage this growth and to address problems associated with it—and to confirm its own preeminence in this domain. Early in 2000, for example, NAS created a "blue-ribbon panel" composed of sixteen educational, political, and business leaders to set standards that school districts could use to make decisions about adopting available designs. *Education Week* noted that the standards were not to be used to rate the designs. Rather "the panel will try to identify criteria that, if met, indicate a design has reasonable objectives, the capacity to deliver, and proven results."[108]

Related to this effort, NAS and the Council for Basic Education joined together to create an independent, nonprofit organization, the Education Quality Institute. The purpose of the institute is to "rate the quality of whole-school designs and other educational intervention strategies on an ongoing basis." In addition, in 2000 NAS set up the Education Entrepreneurs Fund, patterned after the business world's venture-capital funds and touted in a press release as "the only investment fund established and designed to help non-profit and for-profit providers of comprehensive school reform services to implement their research-based designs."[109]

Even as it was working to expand the emerging market for whole-school reform and to provide information for school districts entering the market, NAS was adding new designs to its portfolio of programs. For example, in February 2000, the Accelerated Schools Project, a comprehensive reform program centered at the School of Education of the University of Connecticut, joined NAS.[110]

Underlying all these efforts was the determination to keep federal funds flowing for whole-school reform. Throughout this period, NAS leaders, particularly its new president, Mary Anne Schmitt, played an active role in debates about federal education policy and lobbied Congress on behalf of this reform strategy. For example, in applauding passage of the elementary-secondary education bill by the U.S. Senate in mid-2001, Schmitt singled out for special praise an amendment "to expand and reform the comprehensive school reform program." As she put it, that amendment was "our top legislative priority for the year."[111]

Given the increasing popularity of whole-school designs and the substantial amount of federal dollars available to support this type of reform, these NAS initiatives are logical, important, and, in some cases, necessary additions to its earlier efforts. Moreover, many of these developments seem to indicate a trend in which NAS plays a key role as an arbiter of the whole-school reform model. But they also provide evidence that NAS is increasingly becoming an institution with deep roots inside the Beltway. It is hard to escape the impression that NAS is bent on becoming a permanent Washington fixture out to protect and expand its slice of the federal education budget — a very far cry indeed from what Lamar Alexander and David Kearns had envisioned a decade e rlier. For the foreseeable future, that goal seems secure, as whole-school reform gains more and more adherents and ever-larger appropriations. Yet the warning that Memphis sounded for NAS (and that the earlier Bensenville and Gaston County experiences should have sounded) is that the future of whole-school reform rests as much on the fluid and unpredictable nature of educational politics, changes in leadership, and the sufferance of parents and teachers as it does on successful marketing, buy-in from key administrators, and substantial federal funds to support adoption of whole-school designs. Moreover, the Memphis experience highlights the importance of the education bottom line for all such reform efforts. If student achievement as measured by test scores that are easily understood by parents and community members does not rise, the reform effort will not last.

Memphis raises questions about whether whole-school reform is the best strategy for improving troubled urban schools.

Thus, Memphis raises questions about whether the commitment to whole-school reform is the best strategy for seeking to improve educational outcomes in troubled urban schools. With so many unmanageable and unpredictable variables, whole-school reform will always be tenuous. It may be that one important lesson from the NAS initiative is that reforms involving fewer variables may have greater likelihood of success.

Maris Vinovskis and other scholars have suggested that less ambitious and less costly efforts such as increasing and improving summer schools and summer learning might yield gains as great as or greater than comprehensive school change. As long as we remain committed to whole-school reform as a primary approach to educational improvement (especially when evaluations show that these reforms are producing at best modest results), we lessen the chance to test other less dramatic but possibly more effective initiatives.[112]

Conclusion

It is difficult to assess the impact of the New American Schools initiative on U.S. education, especially when compared to its original goals. Certainly, it has not produced what its founders envisioned when President George Bush introduced it a decade ago on that summer day in the Rose Garden. The heady predictions that NASDC would bring about an educational revolution or even fundamental and dramatic changes in American schools proved to be so much Washington hype. NAS *has* supported a set of highly touted designs, helped its design teams implement them across the nation, and effectively lobbied the federal government to provide funds for school districts that are interested in introducing these (or similar) designs into their schools. But it has created no revolution.

Early in the NAS initiative, perhaps as early as the original request for proposals, the enterprise abandoned any revolutionary tendencies and headed toward the educational mainstream. NASDC leaders were seemingly unaware of how ironic it was to begin a would-be revolution with an RFP process, which by its nature would attract and reward those educators most successful at writing proposals and winning grants. Consequently, most of the winners of NASDC funding were highly regarded, well-established educators, the very people whose work was already influential and well recognized. The predominance of the status quo was accentuated when NAS dropped most of its community-based programs at the end of phases one and two.

Given the composition of most of the winning teams, it was not surprising that many of the education ideas underlying the designs reflected the conventional wisdom among educators. More troubling is that most of the successful proposals relied on one particular set of conventional education ideas, namely those drawn from the Progressive movement of the early twentieth century. Most design teams, by allying themselves with the progressive education tradition, disregarded research findings showing that when ideas such as downplaying discipline-based instruction were put into practice, they had a generally poor record in producing achievement gains, especially among disadvantaged students. Given the concentration of NAS designs in poor-performing urban districts, that last point is particularly salient.

In 1997, with the passage of the Obey-Porter amendment, NAS continued its movement into the educational mainstream. Indeed, supporters of Obey-Porter, including President Clinton, pointed to NAS and its designs as exemplars of how to promote effective change in troubled schools. In several ways, the debate about and passage of Obey-Porter constituted a significant rite of passage for NAS, marking its emergence as a Washington education insider. With the signing of the bill, NAS lined up with other education interest groups to lobby Congress for funds to support its favored programs. In its current incarnation, NAS is almost

indistinguishable from the foundations and government agencies that have dominated school-reform efforts for decades. It has become part of the very education establishment its leaders had once sought to circumvent.

More important than the changed status of NAS is the increasing prominence of NAS-style whole-school reform as one of the most visible, popular, and important education change strategies in the land. NAS has played a key role in that development. It is perhaps the most significant contribution the organization has made to education reform since its founding. Yet it is a troubling development for several reasons.

NAS is now almost indistinguishable from the foundations and government agencies that have dominated school-reform efforts for decades.

First, the fundamental assumption of Obey-Porter and other efforts to promote whole-school reform is the existence of a critical mass of designs proven to be effective in boosting student achievement among children in poorly performing schools. However, except for a small number of programs like Success for All, to date the vast majority of entries on the ever-lengthening Obey-Porter list of exemplary programs (which includes all the NAS designs and many others) *have not been proven effective.* In the case of the NAS designs, the recent RAND study of student performance in NAS-supported schools states simply: "Dramatic achievement gains were not made, although some designs fared better than others." Despite the original determination of NAS not to fund programs that would bring about only "incremental changes [or], at best, modest improvements in student achievement," RAND says, that is exactly what the NAS-supported designs produced: "at best" incremental and modest gains.[11] And the newest study conducted by researchers from the Memphis public schools questions even those results in a city once touted as "the best example this country has to offer of a district embracing school reform." In short, the jury is still out on the value of whole-school reform, even though this strategy is now deeply embedded in federal programs, including the massive Title I program.

Second is the continuing problem of evaluation, which seems particularly acute in relation to NAS-supported programs. The only way that states, districts, and schools can wisely use the emerging market in off-the-shelf whole-school designs that Obey-Porter has helped create is if they have reliable data about the effectiveness of the various designs in boosting student achievement. Efforts in education reform not only need studies about which designs are most effective in general, but also need to identify which designs are most effective in which settings and with which groups of students. Unless NAS and other whole-school reform programs provide potential clients with reliable findings about student achievement from well-designed, rigorously conducted studies, these clients cannot make astute choices among the various whole-school offerings.

Finally, and perhaps of greatest importance, the prominence of NAS-style whole-school reform raises the question of whether this approach to education improvement has pushed aside less dramatic but possibly more effective initiatives. With every study of the NAS initiative, RAND researchers have revealed the vast scope, tangled character, and arduous nature of introducing whole-school reform in urban districts. These studies seem to imply that people concerned about the improvement of urban education should also be investigating less complex and ambitious programs and policies in addition to whole-school reforms.

For example, improving teacher preparation to insure that all teachers come

to their classrooms well educated both in content and in ways to make that content accessible to a diverse student body is as important in schools offering break-the-mold designs as in traditional schools. Having a strong, content-rich curriculum to guide teachers is equally vital. Finally, no reform can operate effectively without well-designed, ongoing evaluation programs that can gauge student progress and identify areas that need improvement.

After Memphis ended its experiment with whole-school reform, one of the first changes the new superintendent made was to order a new districtwide curriculum. A primary reason behind this policy was the problem Memphis had experienced in adopting so many different designs. One teacher noted that "since Memphis has such a mobile student population students fell even further behind because nothing was the same from school to school."[114] High rates of student mobility are an ever-present feature of all urban school districts. Yet the NAS design teams did not appear to have taken that vital fact of urban life and education into consideration when they developed their programs. The seeds for great gains may lie in such small insights about student mobility rates and districtwide curricula. Whether a system adopts whole-school reform or merely tries to fine-tune existing schools, success may ultimately depend most on paying attention to basics, not just reading, writing, and math, but also teacher preparation, curriculum, and student evaluation.

> There is no critical mass of designs proven effective in boosting achievement among children in poorly performing schools.

Notes

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[1] David T. Kearns and John L. Anderson, "Sharing the Vision: Creating New American Schools," in Sam Stringfield, Steven Ross, and Lana Smith, (eds.), *Bold Plans for School Restructuring: The New American Schools Designs* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996): 9-23.

[2] James A. Mecklenburger, "The Braking of the Break-the-Mold Express" *Phi Delta Kappan* 74:4 (December 1992): 281; Margaret Spillane and Bruce Shapiro, "A Small Circle of Friends: Bush's New American Schools," *Nation* 255: 8 (September 21, 1992): 278.

[3] C. Reid Rundell, "To Start a School: NAS as a Catalyst for Systemic Change," *Educational Technology* 32 (November 1992): 14, 16.

[4] Kearns and Anderson, "Sharing the Vision: Creating New American Schools," p. 11.

[5] Susan Bodilly, *Lessons from New American Schools Development Corporation's Demonstration Phase* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996), p. xi.

[6] On the influence of business leaders in Progressive Era school reform see David Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of Urban Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974). Two books from the Progressive Era that promoted progressive-style reform based upon model schools are John Dewey and Evelyn Dewey, *Schools of To-Morrow* (New York: E. Dutton & Company, 1915) and Harold Rugg and Ann Shumaker, *The Child-Centered School* (Yonkers on the Hudson, NY: World Book Company, 1928). Rugg and Shumaker title their second chapter "The Educational Revolution."

[7] This report is based on the extensive journalistic coverage of and commentaries on NAS, the original proposals submitted by the winning design teams, and the books and scholarly articles that have been published about the program. It also draws on the evaluations of NAS projects, particularly those done by the RAND Corporation, which NAS commissioned to assess the projects. The purpose of the RAND studies is to evaluate the progress of NAS designs in regards to implementation and outcomes, a task that is related to, but nevertheless is different from this study. In all, the RAND studies offer a superb look into the problems and possibilities of the type of school reform that NAS has undertaken. In addition to Bodilly, cited above, these studies include Susan Bodilly, Susanna Purnell, Kimberly Ramsey, and Christina Smith, *Designing New American Schools: Baseline Observation on Nine Design Team* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1995); Karen J. Mitchell, *Reforming and Conforming: NASDC Principals Discuss School Accountability Systems* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996); Thomas K. Glennan, Jr., *New American Schools After Six Years* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1998); Susan J. Bodilly, *Lessons from New American Schools' Scale-Up Phase* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1998); Mark Berends, *Assessing the Progress of New American*

Schools: A Status Report (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1999); Mark Berends, Sheila Nataraj Kirby, Scott Naftel, and Christopher McKelvey, *Implementation and Performance in New American Schools: Three Years into Scale-Up* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001); and Susan Bodilly, *New American Schools' Concept of Break the Mold Designs: How Designs Evolved and Why (*Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001).

[8] Karen De Witt, "Bush Sets Up Foundation to Start Model Schools" *New York Times* (July 9 1991), p. A13. The original NASDC board of directors included Thomas Kean, former governor of New Jersey, chair of the board of directors; W. Frank Blount, president of the Communications Products Group of the American Telegraph and Telephone Company, president of NASDC; Louis V. Gerstner, Jr., chair of RJR Nabisco; James K. Baker, chair of Arvin Industries; Frank Shrontz, chair of Boeing Company; Walter H. Annenberg, philanthropist; Norman R. Augustine, chief executive of Martin Marietta Corporation; Gerald L. Baliles, former governor of Virginia; John L. Clendenin, chair and chief executive of BellSouth; James R. Jones, chair and chief executive of the American Stock Exchange; Lee R. Raymond, president of Exxon Corporation; Paul Tagliabue, commissioner of the National Football League; Earl Graves, publisher of *Black Enterprise* magazine; Joan Ganz Cooney, chair of the executive committee of the Children's Television Workshop; Kay Whitmore, chair, chief executive, and president of Eastman Kodak; James J. Renier, chair and chief executive of Honeywell; John Ong, chair of B. F. Goodrich; and Stanley A. Weiss, chair of Business Executives for National Security and the BENS Education Fund.

[9] Julie A. Miller, "Bush Strategy Launches 'Crusade' for Education," *Education Week*, April 24, 1991, http://www.edweek.com. All quotes are from "Excerpt from Bush Administration's Plan to Revamp Schools " *Education Week* (April 24, 1991) and U.S. Department of Education, *America 2000: An Education Strategy* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1991). A highly critical discussion of the four key elements of American 2000 can be found in Harold Howe II, "America 2000: A Bumpy Ride on Four Trains," *Phi Delta Kappan* 73: 3 (November 1991): 192-203. A comprehensive overview of the Bush education initiatives can be found in Maris A. Vinovskis, "America 2000 and the National Education Goals" (unpublished paper prepared for the National Education Goals Panel, November 1999).

[10] President Bush is quoted in Miller, "Bush Strategy Launches 'Crusade' for Education." See also "Excerpt from Bush Administration's Plan to Revamp Schools."

[11] Jonathan Weisman, "Critics Say Bush's New-Schools Plan Is on Fast Track, But Lacks Direction," *Education Week* (July 31, 1991), http://www.edweek.com.

[12] Robert Rothman, "Educators, Analysts Hail Strategy as Bold Departure," *Education Week* (April 24, 1991); Robert Rothman, "'New Schools: Can They Make a Revolution?" *Education Week* (May 8, 1991); Jonathan Weisman, "Businesses Sign on to Bush Plan, But Many Also Raising Concerns," *Education Week* (May 8, 1991); Weisman, "Critics Say Bush's New-Schools Plan Is on Fast Track, But Lacks Direction" All articles at http://www.edweek.com.

[13] Lynn Olson and Julie A. Miller, "Self-styled 'Education President' Places His Record Before Voters," *Education Week* (February 12, 1992), http://www.edweek.com. During this period the Bush education plan was being assailed by both liberals and conservatives. By this time Democrats had killed the 535 schools initiative and Phyllis Schlafly was denouncing "America 2000 as a plan to nationalize schools and usurp parental authority." See "Federal File: Serving Notice; Friendly Fire," *Education Week* (April 22, 1992), http://www.edweek.com.

[14] De Witt, "Bush Sets Up Foundation to Start Model Schools"; Gerald E. Sroufe, "New American Schools Development Corporation: Open For Business," *Educational*

Researcher 20:7 (October 1991): 26.

[15] The RFP is quoted in Henry F. Olds, Jr., and Robert Pearlman, "Designing a New American School," *Phi Delta Kappan* 74:4 (December 1992): 1-2.

[16] The RFP is quoted in Bodilly et al., *Designing New American Schools*, pp. 8-9.

[17] Lynn Olson, "Bidders Striving to Make the Grade in 'New Schools' Competition," *Education Week* (January 29, 1992), pp. 1, 28-9. Kean is quoted in Lynn Olson, "Nearly 700 Teams Submit School-Design Overhauls," *Education Week* (March 11, 1992), pp. 1, 22.

[18] Lynn Olson, "11 Design Team Are Tapped to Pursue their Visions of 'Break the Mold" Schools," *Education Week* (August 5, 1992), pp. 1, 47-52. Kean is quoted in Rundell, "To Start a School: NASDC as a Catalyst for Systemic Change," p. 16.

[19] The College of Human Services [Audrey Cohen College], *Proposal to the New American Schools Development Corporation* (New York: The College of Human Services, 1992); Mecklenburger, "The Braking of the Break-the-Mold Express," pp. 284-5; "Winning Designs for a New Generation of American Schools," *Education Week* (August 5, 1992), p. 50; Audrey Cohen and Janith Jordan, "Audrey Cohen College System of Education: Purpose-Centered Education," in Stringfield et al., *Bold Plans for School Restructuring*, pp. 25-51. See also Mark Pitsch, "The Outsider," *Education Week* (January 25, 1995), http://www.edweek.com.

[20] The Coalition of Essential Schools, *Authentic Teaching, Learning, and Assessment for All Students* (Providence, RI: The Coalition of Essential Schools, 1992; Mecklenburger, "The Braking of the Break-the-Mold Express," pp. 283-4; "Winning Designs for a New Generation of American Schools," *Education Week* (August 5, 1992), p. 50; Cynthia J. Orrell, "ATLAS Communities: Authentic Teaching, Learning, and Assessment for All Students," in Stringfield et al., *Bold Plans for School Restructuring*, pp. 53-74. See also Debra Viadero, "Carry that Weight," *Education Week* (July 12, 1995), http://www.edweek.com.

[21] Bensenville Intergovernmental Group, *The Bensenville Community Design for a New Generation of American Schools* (Bensenville, IL: Bensenville Intergovernmental Group, 1992); Mecklenburger, "The Braking of the Break-the-Mold Express," p. 284; "Winning Designs for a New Generation of American Schools," *Education Week* (August 5, 1992), p. 5.

[22] Community Learning Centers, *Proposal to the New American Schools Development Corporation* (Minneapolis, MN: Community Learning Centers, 1992); Mecklenburger, "The Braking of the Break-the-Mold Express," pp. 285-6; "Winning Designs for a New Generation of American Schools," *Education Week* (August 5, 1992), p. 51; Wayne B. Jennings, "Community Learning Centers," in Stringfield et al., *Bold Plans for School Restructuring*, pp. 233-60.

[23] Bolt, Beranek, and Newman, Inc., *The Co-NECT School: A Design for Twenty-First Century Schools* (Cambridge, MA: Bolt, Beranek, and Newman, Inc., 1992). Mecklenburger, "The Braking of the Break-the-Mold Express," p. 286; "Winning Designs for a New Generation of American Schools," *Education Week* (August 5, 1992), p. 51; Bruce Goldberg and John Richards, "The CO-NECT Design for School Change," in Stringfield et al., *Bold Plans for School Restructuring*, pp. 75-108; Robert C. Johnson, "Connecting Technology," *Education Week* (May 10, 1995), http://www.edweek.com.

[24] Outward Bound USA, *Expeditionary Learning: A Design for New American Schools* (Greenwich, CT: Outward Bound USA, 1992); Mecklenburger, "The Braking of the Break-the-Mold Express," p. 286; "Winning Designs for a New Generation of American

Schools," *Education Week* (August 5, 1992), p. 51; Meg Campbell et al., "The Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound Design," in Stringfield et al., *Bold Plans for School Restructuring*, pp. 109-38.

[25] Los Angeles Learning Centers, *A Proposal Presented to the New American Schools Development Corporation* (Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles Learning Centers, 1992); Mecklenburger, "The Braking of the Break-the-Mold Express," pp. 286-7; "Winning Designs for a New Generation of American Schools," *Education Week* (August 5, 1992), p. 51; John Johnson and John McDonald, "Los Angeles Learning Centers: An Initiative of Los Angeles Unified School District, United Teachers Los Angeles, and Los Angeles Educational Partnership," in Stringfield et al., *Bold Plans for School Restructuring*, pp. 261-88.

[26] The Hudson Institute, *The Modern Red Schoolhouse: Proposal Submitted to the New American Schools Development Corporation* (Indianapolis, IN: The Hudson Institute, 1992); Mecklenburger, "The Braking of the Break-the-Mold Express," p. 287; Ron Heady and Sally Kilgore, "The Modern Red Schoolhouse," in Stringfield et al., *Bold Plans for School Restructuring*, pp. 139-78; "Winning Designs for a New Generation of American Schools," *Education Week* (August 5, 1992), p. 52. See also "Back to the Future," *Education Week* (March 16, 1994), http://www.edweek.com.

[27] National Center on Education and the Economy, *The National Alliance for Restructuring Education: A Proposal to the New American Development Corporation* (Rochester, NY: National Center on Education and the Economy, 1992); Mecklenburger, "The Braking of the Break-the-Mold Express," pp. 287-8; Robert Rothman, "Reform at All Levels: National Alliance for Restructuring Education," in Stringfield et al., *Bold Plans for School Restructuring*, pp. 179-206; "Winning Designs for a New Generation of American Schools," *Education Week* (August 5, 1992), p. 52. See also Lynn Olson, "Beyond Model Schools," *Education Week* (February 8, 1995), http://www.edweek.com.

[28] Gaston County Schools, *The Odyssey Project: A Proposal Submitted to the New American Schools Development Corporation* (Gastonia, NC: Gaston County Schools, 1992); Mecklenburger, "The Braking of the Break-the-Mold Express," p. 288; "Winning Designs for a New Generation of American Schools," *Education Week* (August 5, 1992), p. 52.

[29] Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students, *Roots and Wings: Universal Excellence in Elementary Education* (Baltimore, MD: Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students 1992); Mecklenburger, "The Braking of the Break-the-Mold Express," p. 288; Robert E. Slavin, Nancy A. Madden, and Barbara A. Wasik, "Roots and Wings: Universal Excellence in Elementary Education," in Stringfield et al., *Bold Plans for School Restructuring*, pp. 207-31; "Winning Designs for a New Generation of American Schools," *Education Week* (August 5, 1992), p. 52. See also Robert E. Slavin, Nancy A. Madden, Lawrence J. Dolan, and Barbara A. Wasik, "Roots and Wings: Inspiring Academic Excellence," *Educational Leadership* 52 (November 1994): 10-3; Lynn Olson, "Winning NASDC Project Takes Flight in Md," *Education Week* (January 20, 1993), pp. 1,12-3, Lynn Olson, "For Md. Reform Project, the World Becomes a Lab," *Education Week* (June 9, 1993), pp. 1, 13; Lynn Olson, "Family Ties: A NASDC Grantee Views Support and Outreach Efforts as Essential in Preparing Children to Learn," *Education Week* (December 7, 1994), http://www.edweek.com; Lynn Olson, "Ready to Soar," *Education Week* (May 17, 1995), http://www.edweek.com.

[30] Kearns and Anderson, "Sharing the Vision: Creating New American Schools," pp. 11-13. The Los Angeles Learning Centers, however, eventually rejoined the NAS initiative, rechristened as Urban Learning Centers. On the Los Angeles Learning Centers/Urban Learning Centers

relations with NAS see Bodilly, *New American Schools' Concept of Break the Mold Designs*, pp. 28-30; Bodilly et al., *Designing New American Schools*, pp. 11-12.

[31] Spillane and Shapiro, "A Small Circle of Friends: Bush's New American Schools," p. 281. For similar comments see Douglas D. Noble, "New American Schools and the New World Order" (unpublished paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, April 1992, ERIC Document # Ed 348 715).

[32] Howe, "America 2000: A Bumpy Ride on Four Trains," p. 196. On Howe's support of the Expeditionary Learning design, see Outward Bound USA, *Expeditionary Learning: A Design for New American Schools*, p. iv.

[33] David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering Towards Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 111, 110-13.

[34] Mark Sherry, "Searching for New American Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* 74: 4 (December 1992): 302. See also Mark Sherry, "Searching for New American Schools," *Education Week* (May 6, 1992), pp. 23, 25; and Mecklenburger, "The Braking of the Break-the-Mold Express," p. 282. Lynn Olson also noted the "lack of educational outsiders among the finalists" in Olson, "11 Design Team Are Tapped to Pursue their Visions of 'Break the Mold" Schools," p. 47.

[35] John T. Whiting, "The New American Schools Development Corporation: Did It Create a Climate for Real Reform?" *Phi Delta Kappan* 74: 10 (June 1993): 777-8. See also Lynn Olson, "NAS To Roll Out Next Phase of Replication Plan," *Education Week* (November 30, 1994), pp. 6-7.

[36] Slavin is quoted in Olson, "11 Design Team Are Tapped to Pursue their Visions of 'Break the Mold" Schools," p. 47. Whiting, for example, claimed that besides the bias towards conventional proposals that was built into the RFP process, there was "strong pressure" on NASDC from the corporations funding the venture and from Republican leaders to showcase politically" safe" educational initiatives for the Bush administration prior to the 1992 election. See Whiting, "The New American Schools Development Corporation: Did It Create a Climate for Real Reform?" pp. 778. For similar comments on the review process and its outcomes see, Sherry, "Searching for New American Schools," p. 302; Robert Rothman and Lynn Olson, "Researchers See Little New Knowledge from 'New Schools,'" *Education Week* (August 5 1992), p. 48; Olson, "11 Design Team Are Tapped to Pursue their Visions of 'Break the Mold' Schools," p. 47; and Olson, "NAS To Roll Out Next Phase of Replication Plan," pp. 6-7. Thomas Glennan, Jr., a RAND researcher hired by NAS to assess the program in 1996 made a similar point. "The proposals NAS chose for funding envisioned schools that were certainly different from the norm, but they were not radical departures from what was being proposed or practiced by mainstream reformers . . . " Glennan, *New American Schools After Six Years*, p. 13.

[37] Mecklenburger, "The Braking of the Break-the-Mold Express," pp. 282-2.

[38] E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *The Schools We Need And Why We Don't Have Them* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), pp. 51-2. See also Lynn Olson, "Progressive-Era Concept Now Breaks Mold: NAS Schools Explore 'Project Learning,'" *Education Week* (February 2, 1993), p.6; Glennan, *New American Schools After Six Years*, p. 13.

[39] Lawrence Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), p. 104.

[40] Rugg and Shumaker, *The Child Centered School*, p. 89. The classic study of progressivism in

education is Cremin's *Transformation of the School.* See also Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958* (New York: Routledge, 1987). For more critical perspectives on progressive education see Diane Ravitch, *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000) and David L. Angus and Jeffrey E. Mirel, *The Failed Promise of the American High School, 1890-1995* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999).

[41] These assessments of the progressive nature of the NASDC designs were made after reviewing the eleven original design proposals. The seven proposals that declared they were child or learner centered are Audrey Cohen, Community Learning Centers, Co-NECT, Expeditionary Learning, LA Learning Centers, the Odyssey Project, and Roots and Wings. The eight that redefined teachers as facilitators, guides, etc., are ATLAS, Bensenville, Community Learning Centers, Co-NECT, Expeditionary Learning, the Odyssey Project, LA Learning Centers, and the National Alliance. The nine designs that touted interdisciplinary curricula are Audrey Cohen, ATLAS, Bensenville, Community Learning Centers, Co-NECT, the Odyssey Project, LA Learning Centers, the National Alliance, and Roots and Wings.

[42] The eight proposals that highlighted project learning are Audrey Cohen, ATLAS, Bensenville, Community Learning Centers, Co-NECT, Expeditionary Learning, LA Learning Centers, and Roots and Wings. The seven proposals that planned to use the community as a key educational site are Audrey Cohen, ATLAS, Bensenville, Community Learning Centers, Expeditionary Learning, LA Learning Centers, and the National Alliance. On Kilpatrick and the project method, see Cremin, *The Transformation of the School,* pp. 215-7; Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, pp. 159-66; and Ravitch, *Left Back*, pp. 178-83. For Dewey's views, see John Dewey, *The School and Society/The Child and the Curriculum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press [1900, 1902], 1990).

[43] The commentator is Gerald Stroufe, governmental liaison for the American Education Research Association. He is quoted in Rothman and Olson, "Researchers See Little New Knowledge from 'New Schools.'" Other observers of NAS who have also commented on the progressive nature of most of the designs are Glennan, *New American Schools After Six Years*, p. 13; Hirsch, *The Schools We Need And Why We Don't Have Them*, pp. 51-2; Olson, "Progressive-Era Concept Now Breaks Mold."

[44] Dewey and Dewey, *Schools of To-Morrow*, p. 287.

[45] Ravitch provides a superb overview of progressive educators and their critics in *Left Back.* See also Hirsch *The Schools We Deserve.*

[46] Jeanne S. Chall, *The Academic Achievement Challenge: What Really Works in the Classroom* (New York: Guilford Press, 2000): 79-100. James Traub makes a similar point in his assessment of whole-school designs. He noted that the designs that showed the strongest positive effects on achievement were those "that focus on basic skills or a rigorous curriculum. The least effective of the models, in general, are those that offered an interdisciplinary curriculum, 'higher-order thinking skills,' a highly constructivist pedagogy and the like." See James Traub, *Better by Design? A Consumer's Guide to Schoolwide Reform* (Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 1999), p. 5.

[47] C. Reid Rundell, "NASDC: A Businessman's Experience," *Phi Delta Kappan* 74:4 (December 1992): 290-5; Rundell, "To Start a School: NASDC as a Catalyst for Systemic Change," pp. 13-6; Louanne M. Wheeler, "New Designs for American Schools," *Principal* 72 (January 1993): 17-21.

[48] Roslyn A. Mickelson and Angela L. Wadsworth, "NAS's Odyssey in Dallas (NC): Women, Class, and School Reform," *Educational Policy* 10: 3 (September 1996): 329-30; Jeffrey Mirel, "School Reform Unplugged: The Bensenville New American School Project, 1991-93," *American Educational Research Journal* 31 (Fall 1994): 489-93, 507-13. For additional information on the Odyssey Project see Meg Sommerfeld, "Christian Activists Seek to Torpedo NASDC Project," *Education Week* (March 10, 1993), pp. 18-9, and Rodney S. Earle, "The Odyssey Project: A Quest for School Design" (1994, ERIC Document #ED 373 712).

[49] Lynn Olson and Meg Sommerfeld, "Nine of 11 Design Teams to Get NASDC Funding," *Education Week* (June 9, 1993), p. 8.

[50] Olson and Sommerfeld, "Nine of 11 Design Teams to Get NASDC Funding," p. 8.

[51] Bodilly, *New American Schools' Concept of Break the Mold Designs,* pp. 28-30. Unlike other NAS designs involved in the scale-up, Urban Learning Centers mainly focused on its original jurisdiction. See also Bodilly et al., *Designing New American Schools*, pp. 11-12; Olson and Sommerfeld, "Nine of 11 Design Teams to Get NASDC Funding," p. 8; Meg Sommerfeld, "$50 Million Shot in the Arm Gives NASDC New Life," *Education Week* (January 26, 1994), p. 10.

[52] Lynn Olson, "Former E.D. Official, Xerox Chief Kearns to Head NASDC," *Education Week* (June 16, 1993), p. 5. See also David T. Kearns, "Toward a New Generation of American Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* 74:10 (June 1993): 773-6.

[53] Sommerfeld, "$50 Million Shot in the Arm Gives NASDC New Life," pp. 1, 10.

[54] Cross is quoted in Sommerfeld, "$50 Million Shot in the Arm Gives NASDC New Life," p. 10.

[55] In arguing that the Clinton administration and NASDC both endorsed systemic reform does not mean that they defined the term in the same way. Indeed, as Maris Vinovskis has found, the definitions of systemic reform are quite flexible and varied. See Maris A. Vinovskis, "An Analysis of the Concept and Uses of Systemic Educational Reform," *American Educational Research Journal* 33:1 (Spring 1996): 53-85. On NASDC's commitment to "systemic reform" see Lynn Olson, "Alliance Aims for 'Break the Mold Systems,' Not Just Schools," *Education Week* (August 4, 1993), p. 8. Anderson is quoted in Lynn Olson, "NASDC to Roll Out Next Phase of Replication Plan," *Education Week* (November 30, 1994), p. 6.

[56] Schwartz is quoted in Sommerfeld, "$50 Million Shot in the Arm Gives NASDC New Life," p. 10.

[57] Gerber is quoted in Sommerfeld, "$50 Million Shot in the Arm Gives NASDC New Life," p. 10. Annenberg also committed another $15 million to the Education Commission of the States to help disseminate NASDC designs. Olson, "NASDC to Roll Out Next Phase of Replication Plan," p. 6.

[58] "NASDC Sets Criteria for Winning Proposals," *Education Week* (November 30, 1994), p. 6. Olson, "NASDC to Roll Out Next Phase of Replication Plan."

[59] Kearns and Anderson, "Sharing the Vision: Creating New American Schools," p. 13.

[60] Olson, "NAS To Roll Out Next Phase of Replication Plan," pp. 6-7.

[61] Olson, "NAS To Roll Out Next Phase of Replication Plan," p.7.

[62] Bodilly et al., *Designing New American Schools*, pp. 64, 25-33, 63-66.

[63] Bodilly, *Lessons from New American Schools Development Corporation's Demonstration Phase*, pp. 33-39; 103-06. See also Meg Sommerfeld, "Progress Report on NASDC Projects Finds Mixed Results," *Education Week* (May 1, 1996), p. 6.

[64] Bodilly, *Lessons from New American Schools Development Corporation's Demonstration Phase*, p. xiii.

[65] Bodilly, *Lessons from New American Schools Development Corporation's Demonstration Phase*, p. xiv.

[66] Mitchell, *Reforming and Conforming: NASDC Principals Discuss School Accountability Systems*, pp. viii-x, 13, 14-18.

[67] The Coalition of Essential Schools, *Authentic Teaching, Learning, and Assessment for All Students*, pp. 5-6.

[68] Vinovskis, "An Analysis of the Concept and Uses of Systemic Educational Reform," p. 74. For similar views on the need for more modest reform efforts see Mirel, "School Reform Unplugged"; and Tyack and Cuban, *Tinkering Towards Utopia*, pp. 7-11, 110-33,132-42.

[69] See, for example, Steve Farkas and Jean Johnson, *Different Drummers: How Teachers of Teachers View Public Education* (New York: Public Agenda, 1997), p. 15; Mary Haywood Metz, "Real School: A Universal Drama Amid Disparate Experience," in Douglas E. Mitchell and Margaret Goertz, eds., *Education Politics for the New Century* (New York: Falmer Press, 1990), pp. 75-91; David Tyack and William Tobin, "The 'Grammar' of Schooling: Why Has it Been so Hard to Change?" *American Educational Research Journal* 31: 3 (Fall 1994): 453-79.

[70] Education Commission of the States, *Listen, Discuss and Act: Parents' and Teachers' Views on Education Reform* (Denver, CO: The Commission, June 1996), p. 9.

[71] The quote is from Bodilly, *Designing New American Schools*, p. 9.

[72] Bodilly, *Lessons from New American Schools' Scale-Up Phase*, p. 11.

[73] Debra Viadero, "Who's In, Who's Out: Grant Program's List of 17 Reform Models Attracts Criticism," *Education Week* (January 20, 1999), p. 1; Glennan, *New American Schools After Six Years*, pp. xi-xiv, 5; and David J. Hoff, "Proposal Would Link School Dollars, Proven Models," *Education Week* (September 10, 1997), http://www.edweek.com.

[74] Glennan, *New American Schools After Six Years*, p. xi. Though the organization began using the NAS name in 1995, the official name change did not take place until 1998. See Adrienne D. Coles, "New American School Corp. Has New Identity, Same Goal," *Education Week* (October 28, 1998), http://www.edweek.com. It is worth noting that besides the word "Development" the word "Corporation" also disappeared from the name, a decision that, whether intended or not, muted the corporate origins of NAS.

[75] Glennan, *New American Schools After Six Years*, p. 8. Of the 553 schools, 9.6 percent were using the ATLAS design, 3.0 percent Audrey Cohen, 7.6 percent Co-NECT, 6.7 percent Expeditionary Learning, 8.5 percent Modern Red Schoolhouse, 39.2 percent National Alliance for Restructuring Education, and 25.3 percent Roots and Wings.

[76] Bodilly, *Lessons from New American Schools' Scale-Up Phase*, pp. 14-5; Berends, *Assessing the Progress of New American Schools*, pp. xiv, 24-7.

[77] National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 1995* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1995), p. 103. Stringfield is quoted in Lynn Olson, "Designs for Learning," *Education Week* (February 12, 1997), http://www.edweek.com. For more on reform in Memphis see Gerry House, "Re-Creating a School System: Lesson Learned in Memphis about Whole School Reform," *Education Week* (April 5, 2000), pp. 38, 41.

[78] Lynn Olson, "Memphis Study Tracks Gains in Whole-School Design," *Education Week* (May 27, 1998), http://www.edweek.com. The only design team in the study singled out for discussion was Roots and Wings. Eight of the twenty-five redesigned schools used the Roots and Wings designs and, according to Ross, these schools showed improvements that were "highly statistically significant."

[79] Glennan, *New American Schools After Six Years*, p. 55.

[80] Glennan, *New American Schools After Six Years*, pp. 6-7; and Lynn Olson, "On Their Own Design Teams Must Build on Foundation," *Education Week* (February 12, 1997), http://www.edweek.com.

[81] The $50,000 figure comes from Glennan, *New American Schools After Six Years*, p. xii, and the over $500,000 figure (for Co-NECT) comes from Rebecca Herman, *An Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform* (Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, 1999), p. 5, http://www.aasa.org/reform/index.htm.

[82] Sentiment for programs similar to whole-school reform had been building for several years prior to Obey-Porter. As early as 1994, Congress and the Clinton administration were pushing "schoolwide" reform as a way of improving Title I programs. George Farkas and L. Shane Hall argue that rather than improving Title I these schoolwide reform efforts actually undercut the program's effectiveness. See George Farkas and L. Shane Hall, "Can Title I Attain Its Goal?" in Diane Ravitch, ed., *Brookings Papers on Education Policy, 2000* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 2000), pp. 74-103.

[83] David J. Hoff, "Proposal Would Link School Dollars, Proven Models," *Education Week* (September 10, 1997); David J. Hoff, "Clinton Adds School Success Effort to His Agenda," *Education Week* (November 5, 1997); Joetta L. Sack, "Spending Measure Boosts Education Funding," *Education Week* (November 19, 1997); and David J. Hoff, "Reform Efforts Expects Wave of New Takers," *Education Week* (April 22, 1998), http://www.edweek.com. See also Robert E. Slavin, "How Title I Can Become the Engine of Reform in American Schools" in Geoffrey Borman, Samuel Stringfield, and Robert Slavin eds., *Title I: Compensatory Education at the Crossroads* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001), pp. 242-3. For the elements of a comprehensive design, see Herman, *An Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform*, p. 15.

[84] Hoff, "Clinton Adds School Success Effort to His Agenda." For the complete list of exemplary programs see Viadero, "Who's In, Who's Out."

[85] For the statement about federal funding, see Kearns and Anderson, "Sharing the Vision Creating New American Schools," p. 11.

[86] Walberg is quoted in Viadero, "Who's In, Who's Out."

[87] Lynn Olson, "Study: Schoolwide Reform Not Easy," *Education Week* (April 1, 1998), http://www.edweek.com.

[88] Bodilly, *Lessons from New American Schools' Scale-Up Phase*, pp. xiv-xvii, 17-20, 35-6, 107-14; Olson, "Study: Schoolwide Reform Not Easy."

[89] Olson, "Study: Schoolwide Reform Not Easy."

[90] Lynn Olson, "Following the Plan," *Education Week* (April 14, 1999), pp. 28, 29, 32.

[91] The introduction is signed by Paul Houston, American Association of School Administrators; Samuel Sava, National Association of Elementary School Principals; Robert Chase, National Education Association; Sandra Feldman, American Federation of Teachers; and Thomas Koerner, National Association of Secondary School Principals. See Rebecca Herman, *An Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform*, pp. 1, 5-6. See also Lynn Olson, "Researchers Rate Whole-School Reform Models," *Education Week* (February 17, 1999), http://www.edweek.com.

[92] Herman, *An Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform*, pp. 5-6. The Audrey Cohen spokesperson is quoted in Olson, "Researchers Rate Whole-School Reform Models."

[93] John Anderson, "Is It Working Yet?" *Education Week* (June 2, 1999), http://www.edweek.com. These criticisms of traditional educational research are echoed in congressional testimony given by the current president of NAS, Mary Anne Schmitt. Schmitt criticized after-the-fact research as mere chronicles of " bad decisions" and, like Anderson, called for "means of measuring widespread implementation school by school rather than through selective sampling." See Mary Anne Schmitt, "Testimony before the U.S. Congress, Education Reform Subcommittee of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce (July 17, 2001), http://www.westlaw.com.

[94] Anderson, "Is It Working Yet?" Anderson had also touted the data on achievement gains in Memphis in an earlier column. See John Anderson, "Comprehensive School Reform Will Need Comprehensive Support," *Education Week* (June 24, 1988), http://www.edweek.com. For more on NAS and Memphis see House, "Re-Creating a School System: Lesson Learned in Memphis about Whole School Reform."

[95] Lynn Olson, "NAS Launches Loan Fund to Support Adoption of School Designs," *Education Week* (March 8, 2000); Debra Viadero, "RAND Finds Mixed Result for School Reform Models," *Education Week* (April 18, 2001); both at http://www.edweek.com.

[96] Berends et al., *Implementation and Performance in New American Schools*, pp. 25-36. Viadero, "RAND Finds Mixed Results for School Reform Models."

[97] Berends et al., *Implementation and Performance in New American Schools*, pp. xx-xxi, 37-78.

[98] Berends et al., *Implementation and Performance in New American Schools*, pp. xxi, 131.

[99] Berends et al., *Implementation and Performance in New American Schools*, pp. xxi, 131, 79-132. The finding that Roots and Wings and Modern Red Schoolhouse were the most consistent in improving achievement supports the findings of Jeanne Chall and James Traub cited earlier.

[100] Berends et al., *Implementation and Performance in New American Schools*, p. 143.

[101] Berends et al., *Implementation and Performance in New American Schools*, pp. 152-3.

[102] Aimee Edmondson, "Watson Kills All Reform Models for City Schools," *Memphis Commercial Appeal* (June 19, 2001); Aimee Edmondson and Michael Erskine, "School Reform Put to Test, Now to Rest," *Memphis Commercial Appeal* (June 21, 2001); Michael Erskine, "Teachers: Lack of Time, Resources and Support Doomed Reform Models," *Memphis Commercial Appeal* (July 2, 2001), http://www.gomemphis.com. See also Debra Viadero, "Memphis Scraps Redesign Models in All Its Schools," *Education Week* (July 11, 2001), http://www.edweek.com

[103] Viadero, "Memphis Scraps Redesign Models in All Its Schools"; Berends et al., *Implementation and Performance in New American Schools*, pp.109-10.

[104] Viadero, "Memphis Scraps Redesign Models in All Its Schools." On Watson, see www.memphis-schools.k12.tn.us/admin/communications/superintendent/bio. The three successful programs were Core Knowledge, Voices of Love and Freedom, and Widening Horizons Through Literacy. See Edmondson, "Watson Kills All Reform Models for City Schools."

[105] Ross is quoted in Edmondson and Erskine, "School Reform Put to Test, Now to Rest." The president of the union is quoted in Viadero, "Memphis Scraps Redesign Models in All Its Schools." See also Erskine, "Teachers: Lack of Time, Resources and Support Doomed Reform Models."

[106] When analyzed year by year, the RAND study provided additional evidence of serious problems with the NAS designs. The RAND researchers found that in 1998, the last year that they examined, "NAS schools [were] well below the district average." Berends et al., *Implementation and Performance in New American Schools*, pp. 109-10, 103-10; Edmondson, "Watson Kills All Reform Models for City Schools."

[107] One particularly troubling aspect of the NAS research and evaluation program is the apparent lack of attention NAS has given to previous efforts in similar programs. For example, in 1973, the Brookings Conference on Social Experimentation "examined two federal programs that were explicitly designed for planned variation—Follow Through and Head Start Planned Variation." Like NAS, these programs sought to implement a number of different educational models in a variety of settings. At the meeting's conclusion, the organizers, Alice Rivlin and Michael Timpane, provided a six-point outline for researching such programs. The utility of these ideas for evaluating the NAS initiative are immediately obvious, including as they do such suggestions as "having identical measures across all units in order to facilitate cross-site comparisons." See Maris A. Vinovskis, *History and Educational Policy Making* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 94-5. A full discussion of the Brookings conference and these ideas can be found in Alice M. Rivlin and Michael P. Timpane, "Planned Variation in Education: An Assessment," in Alice M. Rivlin and Michael P. Timpane, (eds.), *Planned Variation in Education: Should We Give Up or Try Harder?* (Washington, DC; Brookings Institution Press, 1975), pp. 1-21.

[108] Lynn Olson, "Blue-Ribbon Panel to Set Standards for Reform Models," *Education Week* (February 9, 2000), p. 10.

[109] Lynn Olson, "'Consumer Guide' Aimed at Reform Programs," *Education Week* (December 6, 2000), http://www.edweek.com. In April 2001, NAS appointed Marc Dean Millot president of the Entrepreneurs Fund. "Prior to joining NAS, Mr. Millot was a senior social scientist with the RAND Corporation." This description is from New American Schools, "Education Entrepreneurs Fund Appoints President," news release (April 16, 2001). The description of the fund is from New American Schools, "Education Entrepreneurs Fund Loans $500,000 to Voices of Love and Freedom," press release (May 9, 2001), http//www.newamericanschools.org.

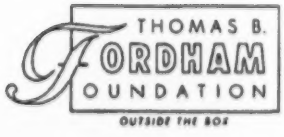
[110] New American Schools, "New American Schools Adds Design Team to Portfolio," press release (November 28, 2000), http//www.newamericanschools.org.

[111] New American Schools, "Statement by New American Schools President Mary Anne Schmitt on the Passage of H.R. 1 in the U.S. House of Representatives," press release (May 24, 2001); New American Schools, "Statement by New American Schools President Mary Anne Schmitt on the Passage of the Education Bill by the U.S. Senate," press release (June 19, 2001), http//www.newamericanschools.org.

[112] Vinovskis, "An Analysis of the Concept and Uses of Systemic Educational Reform," p. 74. See also G. Alfred Hess, Jr., "Accountability in Chicago" (unpublished paper presented at the Brookings Institution conference on urban education, May 15-16, 2001).

[113] Berends et al, *Implementation and Performance in New American Schools*, pp. xxii, 143.

[114] Erskine, "Teachers: Lack of Time, Resources and Support Doomed Reform Models."



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